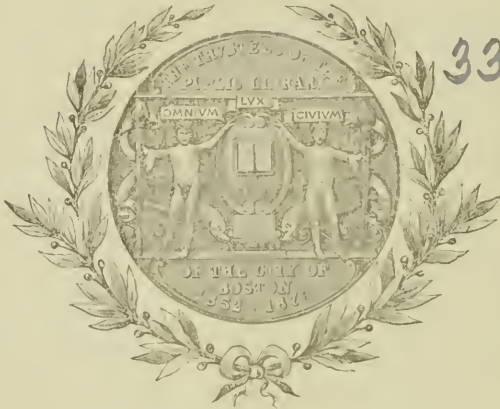


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adolescent

IN YOUR FAMILY



Foreword

Since its earliest days, the Children's Bureau has been attempting to help parents in their great undertaking of giving the next generation the best possible start in life by means of a series of bulletins based on sound research in child development. This series currently includes: Prenatal Care, Infant Care, Your Child From One to Six, and Your Child from Six to Twelve.

This bulletin now becomes the fifth in the series.

Adolescence is a hard period to write about. Divergences between children seem to grow more marked as their range and variety of behavior becomes greater. Many problems arising in this period have, as yet, been unstudied. In the United States of today, to picture the wide variations in family life, in parents' hopes and expectations of their children, is impossible. To make statements that fit all family or cultural patterns is obviously out of the question. What the Children's Bureau has tried to do in this bulletin is to give some of the underlying needs of young, growing, human creatures which result in behavior that is sometimes hard for parents to understand. Our hope is that each parent who reads it will interpret what is said according to his own special situation and requirements.

People from a wide variety of professional fields have been most helpful in giving suggestions to the writer of the bulletin, Mrs. Marion L. Faegre. Among the fields represented by reviewers are child psychology and psychiatry, parent and family life education, nursing, social work, and cultural anthropology. Detailed review was given by the Bureau's Pediatric Advisory Committee, a group chosen by four medical societies to represent them. They are: Dr. Alfred H. Washburn, American Pediatric Society; Dr. Myron E. Wegman, Society for Pediatric Research; Dr. Steward H. Clifford, American Academy of Pediatrics; and Dr. Julius H. Hess, American Medical Association. To all the reviewers, the Children's Bureau expresses its sincere thanks. In addition, the bulletin has profited much by the comments of a number of parents who graciously consented to read it.


MARTHA M. ELIOT, M. D.,
Chief, Children's Bureau.

THE
adolescent
IN YOUR FAMILY



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SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

• CHILDREN'S BUREAU

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Introduction

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief . . . it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Of the millions of parents who remember reading those words, there are probably few who don't hear in them some echo of their own adolescence, as well as a reminder of the times Charles Dickens described in "A Tale of Two Cities." They serve as a thumbnail sketch of the ups and down that are a part of normal adolescence, when boys and girls waver back and forth between the safety and security of dependence on their parents and the urge to discover what life holds out to them as independent human beings.

The best of times—those wonderful moments when they have found a friend with whom to share innermost thoughts; the worst of times—when a long-anticipated occasion leaves them feeling they have miserably failed to live up to it. The season of Light, when they stand on a mountain peak with Keats, and the season of Darkness when they are crushed by the seeming indifference of the adult world toward what they have to offer. The spring of hope and the winter of despair can trip over each other's heels, too, with a suddenness never noted on any calendar.

Any period that involves so many adjustments, and lasts as long as adolescence does in our culture, is bound to have emotional peaks and valleys. In actual fact, the troublesome valleys are rarer than the wide stretches of sunny, open fields. When parents accept unevenness as an inevitable part of normal growing up, instead of getting all choked up by feelings, whether of guilt or censure, the adolescent has the best chance to work out his solutions. What he needs from his parents is the assurance that they are standing by, ready to act as

shock absorbers. Parents need not—and should not—expect to “understand” everything their boys and girls are going through. But it helps if they recognize the signs of growth, and are patient. This is a time for much listening and little telling.

One thing is certain. No family in which there are adolescents need worry about life's being tedious or dull. Something new, lively, and challenging is happening every day. And the father and mother whose role for many a year has been to teach now find themselves becoming learners. Sons and daughters who so short a while ago were mere babies, for whom they had to open doors, now open doors for them—doors that lead into new ideas and a new outlook on the surrounding world. To share the companionship of fresh young minds is an experience that can't be bought.

And as they move toward the time when their children will be ready to get along without them, parents can do so with lessening doubts and assurance that when such lively, intelligent, unafraid and energetic people are arriving on the scene, more and more of the things they have longed to see accomplished will be tackled.

Every child passes three milestones on his way to being grown up. The first, when he leaves the helplessness of infancy behind, by standing on his own two feet and taking his first steps. The next comes when he takes another kind of step toward independence—that of leaving his sheltering home for school. He reaches the third milestone when at puberty he goes through the changes that make him an adolescent, and achieves still greater freedom. (And not so far down the road, but still out of sight, is the fourth milestone—that of leaving home for a job or marriage.)

Perhaps because of the startling maturity teen-age minds sometimes show, parents seem to look at their sons and daughters now with different eyes than they did before. They know their youngsters so well—and yet they begin to think they don't know them at all. They can't bear to see them get hurt—yet they want them to have many experiences. They are eager for them to have a good time—but worry if the “good time” seems to be of a different pattern from the ones they had. They ache over the frustrations their children suffer, knowing all the while that life without conflict would be dull and uninteresting.

And what about this present period of uncertainty their children are facing? There's no calm sea anywhere in which to launch the adolescents of today! We can take comfort as parents in that we've provided them with the best chart we knew—the one on which is written our faith in them. They've never known any other world than one of uncertainty. And they have a lot of courage.

Some parents have heard so much about adolescence being a period of "stress and strain" that they actually look on it with dread. They have listened to many accounts of "wild youth," and have heard much about the anxious struggles that teen-agers go through on the way to being grown up. It's not surprising that they presume they and their children are in for a tough time.

How much reality is there in the murky picture that's sometimes sketched? After all, this is just another stage in the growing-up process that's been going on since birth. Are there any good reasons why parents shouldn't be able to take it in their stride, or is it harder to bring up adolescents nowadays?

Reasons for parents' concern

A number of circumstances do something toward making adolescence a rather heavily burdened word.

First of all, we live in a more and more complicated, mechanized world; a world that has been changed by inventions too fast for our habits and attitudes to keep up. More money and effort go into such things as devising weapons of warfare than into studying how human beings can get along together. "Many feel," said the 1950 White House Conference on Children and Youth, "that a peaceful world is an impossibility without further study of man and his behavior."

Then there is a second reason for our concern. More is expected of parents today. Shelvesful of knowledge about children have been gathered. We look to those who study children to tell us just how to bring them up and find, maybe, that their theories disagree, or don't seem to work, for us.

"A generation (reared to expect change) could regard change not as a feared catastrophe, but as a privileged human environment in which they would continue growing all their lives, instead of settling into the narrow vistas of a world which achieves stability by unfitting its children to live in any but one way."

Margaret Mead: Technological Change and Child Development.

Understanding the Child, 21 : 109-112, October 1952—
p. 111.

It's good to remind ourselves that *no one* has all the answers. Students of child life often find their children as perplexing as the rest of us do.

We don't know how many of the problems we face grow out of changes going on in the young person himself, and in how far adolescence, as we see it, is determined by the kind of culture we live in. Our way of life, for instance, demands that adolescents be "educated," that they make choices about how they'll earn a living; and yet the family is increasingly less able by itself to prepare its children for earning their living.

Children's earlier contact with the world outside the home has something to do with a third puzzling aspect of our relations with our teen-agers. This is that they feel grown up quite long before our way of living gives them the amount of independence they'd like to have.

The unevenness of children's development is surprising, too. They may be really grown up, as far as physiological and mental development go, without showing other kinds of maturity. They switch back and forth between seeming capable one minute and childish the next. A boy may be doing expert work on a car and in his absorption get grease on his good pants as carelessly as he did as a 10-year-old. Parents are likely to be more impressed (and exasperated) by the occasional immature behavior than by the more frequent performances at the adult level.

We are not ready to accept the problems presented by adolescents' sexual coming-of-age. For we know they aren't ready, in our kind of society, to take on the burden of supporting themselves and a family. In this far from simple world young people can't get ready to start out for themselves as early as they feel the urge to. When a father could give his son part of his farm, or when a young fellow could strike out for himself and go west to take up land, boys turned into men sooner. And when most girls learned to manage a household by helping their mothers, no one thought of their needing schooling in order to learn the role of wife and mother.

More education is required

Now, much of that is changed. The great shift away from farms has meant boys must be prepared for the thousand and one different specialized jobs which stores and factories and the building of roads and planes and bridges, and the selling of goods have made necessary. Many jobs have become so specialized it takes years to get to be expert at them, whether they are carpentry or plumbing or electrical construction, or medicine, teaching or engineering. A lawyer, for instance, who years back could become one by "reading" law in a

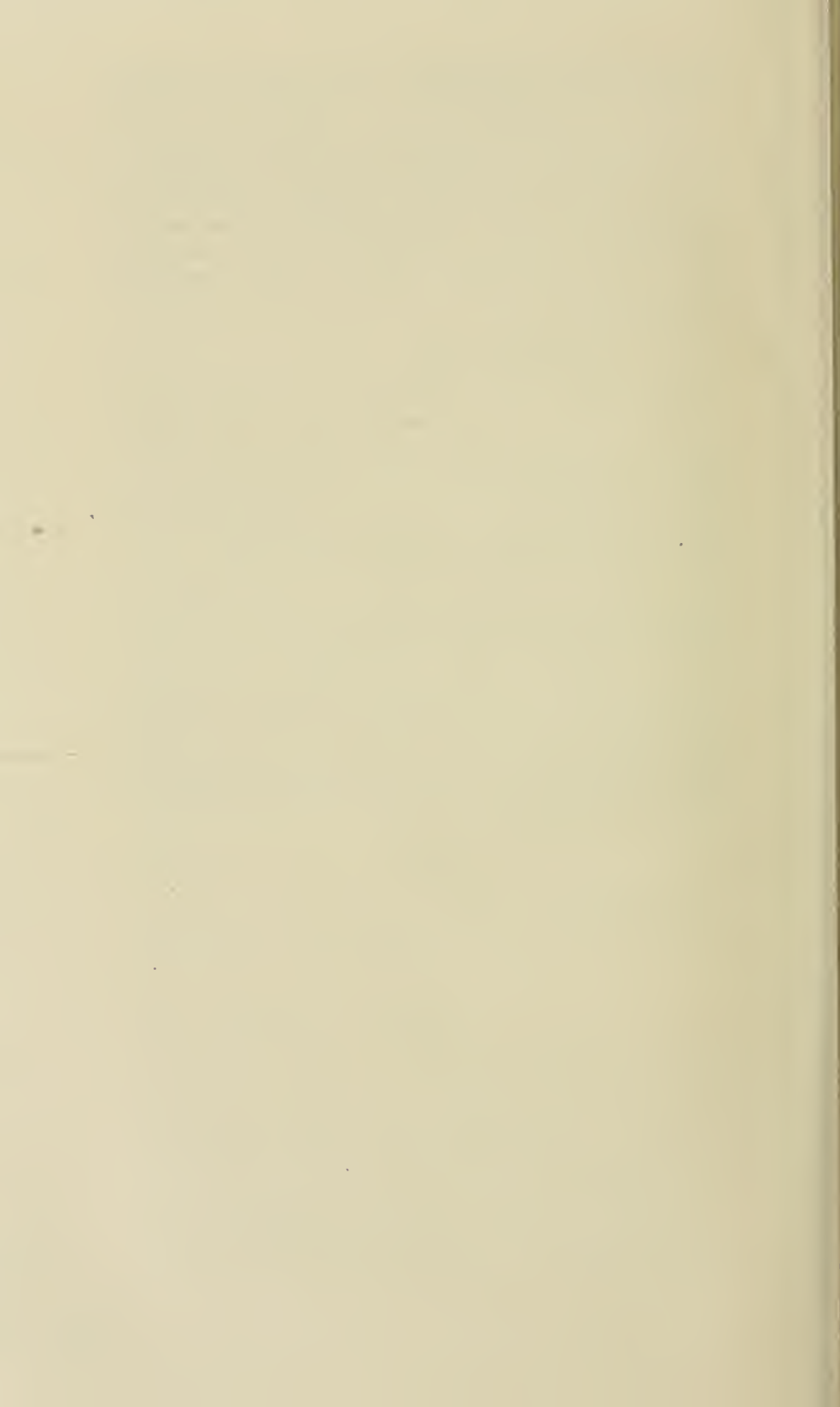
lawyer's office, must now have 7 years of special schooling before he or she can practice.

There is so much more to learn! The time boys and girls must go to school has been lengthened. Instead of being able to leave school at 14, as was once the rule, 16 and even 18, are now the common ages at which compulsory education ends. This complicates matters. For simply setting a date when a young person can leave school doesn't necessarily mean that what he gets in school, right up to that moment, is just right for his needs.

These are some of the reasons why so many of us feel timid about encountering adolescence.

But we can do away with some of our uneasiness by stopping to think back over the years of effort that we've put into our job. We've been preparing for this time since the day our baby was born. No one is quicker than the "experts" to point out that we often do wrong when we know better, and that no one knows "the right" answer. Any of us, thinking back, can remember times when we could have done things differently. But are we *sure* another way would have been better?

Of course there will be perplexities. Even to describe all these, let alone pretending to suggest solutions, would be impossible. But the more understanding we gain of our children, the better compass we have in our hands as a guide for our actions. And with greater understanding of how children grow and think and feel comes greater insight into our own behavior—how we got to be what we are, how we can build up our ability to deal comfortably with our sons and daughters, and why, instead of worrying about past mistakes, we should think of the promise that comes with each new day.



What is adolescence?



When we use the word "adolescence" we usually think of the teens. Actually, a child may reach adolescence before the teen age, and in some cases physical growth may still be going on in the early twenties. For practical purposes we ordinarily speak of adolescence as the period leading up to and for a number of years after a boy or girl has passed through the changes that come to a climax in sexual maturity. And because growing up is accomplished for almost all young people in the years between 12 and 20, it is convenient to call this adolescence. But because this span of years is so long, and covers such a variety of changes, the discussion in this publication is limited to the earlier part of the teens. No attempt is made here to cover the many questions that come up when young people leave home to go to work or to school elsewhere or to marry.

Growth is a continuous thing. It's not marked off definitely so that we can say, "Now, it's time for this to happen," or "That's over and done with." Few things about growth are as decisive as getting one's full set of teeth, and even those few aren't reached at certain exact times. Growth is uneven, too. Children don't grow at the same pace mentally, physically, socially or emotionally. Each has his or her own way of growing that's not quite like anyone else's.

As if individual growth differences and the differences between boys' and girls' growth weren't confusing enough, progress sometimes comes in leaps and bounds. This is most noticeable in height. After a period of slow growth, a child amazes himself and us by growing several inches in a single year, perhaps. But by and large, it's the progress toward adulthood that can't be seen and measured in inches or pounds or growth of vocabulary that is surprising and mysterious. This growth often shows up in flashes. A boy reveals the stuff he is made of by standing up for a friend under hard conditions. When her mother falls sick, a girl takes over responsibilities no one guessed she was capable of carrying. By voluntarily shining his shoes a boy lets us into the secret of his awakening interest in girls; as a girl shows her interest in boys by coming down to breakfast with lipstick on.

Puberty, or the point at which sexual maturity comes, marks a child's passage into adolescence. The changes that come with it concern everything about a person. They make him act different, and look different, and feel different. His attitudes to other people change, and certainly his attitude toward himself does. We onlookers see the gangling arms and

legs, but we cannot so easily see the way the boy and girl regard the results of becoming taller—or remaining shorter—than their classmates. We cannot peer into a boy's mind and know with what ambitious longing he reads about explorers or scientists or airplane pilots. Nor can we guess what heroine—storied or real—is back of a girl's enthusiasm for club work or clothes or painting.

Signs of change are many

We may see—and sometimes be irritated by—the swing between furious activity and lackadaisical laziness, but we can't see the chemical changes in the body that account for the way energy is produced and consumed. But we can take for granted that food is terribly important while bodies are growing fast and energy is used up rapidly. We can try to keep from having those so-called "lazy" spells accounted for by lack of good body building foods, at any rate.

The outward signs of sexual maturing are obvious enough. But how often we neglect to read them! Lou meets with a flood of tears her mother's decision: "No! You don't need a new dress!" A new dress may be exactly what Lou needs to set things right inside her. (What to substitute, in case we can't afford the new dress, is another matter.) To be allowed to drive the family car occasionally, once the State law allows him a license, may be precisely the tonic that will permit a boy to throw back his shoulders proudly when he meets a girl he's lately been seeing with new eyes.

Looking at behavior not for what it is on the surface but for what it suggests is a game parents can become good at if they have the patience to learn to play it. From the late-lying-abeid in the morning to the late-staying-up at night, the adolescent's day is crammed with things that have to be interpreted. The daydreaming, the sudden irritation over who knows what, the criticism of younger brothers and sisters are puzzling until we learn that they are to be expected. We parents learned the language of adolescence too long ago to read it now without a dictionary.

Sometimes the surprises we get are very pleasant. When adolescents show remarkable self-control in a situation where not so long ago they might have gone to pieces; when they show clear discrimination between right and wrong over an issue whose edges might easily seem blurred; when they show sympathy or good will in a situation where it may not be to their seeming advantage—then we can truly welcome adolescence. This is growth that can't be measured by a footrule.

We can predict that most teen-agers will pass through adolescence with only a normal number of aches and pains, and that they will become reasonably adequate and happy adults. Given dependable and understanding parents, who are in harmony with each other, boys and girls stand a good chance of being able to handle the new problems adolescence brings.



Influences of earlier life experience

Whether or not a child emerges from adolescence “master of his fate” to a reasonable degree isn’t just a matter of how he manages the new and strange features of the maturing process. Important as these new things are, he carries, along with them, the influences and effects of the relationships we began to build with him far back in his life.

If we have made him sure of our delight and belief in him, he will feel secure enough not to find this next phase of his life overburdened with worries. Courage, or disbelief in himself; expectation of fair treatment, or grudging suspicion of others’ motives; an energetic absorption in satisfying work; the ability to give and take love—these and many more attitudes that become more fixed with the years have all been influenced by the ways in which our lives and our child’s have been intertwined. Does Anna’s mother always take her part, when her daughter complains of a teacher’s slights, or does she try to find out the facts, in order not to take sides hastily? It will show in Anna’s sense of responsibility.

How we disciplined our children when they were little is inescapably mixed up with their feelings as adolescents. If we seldom did it in a scratchy voice, our adolescent’s hackles won’t be ready to rise when we, or others in authority, speak. If we were liberal with our love, our boys and girls are more ready to know how to express their affection. If we remembered to praise the things they did right, and judged behavior not simply as it affected our convenience, our teen-agers won’t have to try to hide from us, in constant expectation of criticism.

Chances are, we got so used to dictating (“Time to go to bed!” “Stop teasing that cat!” “Be sure to take your raincoat!”) that we still sometimes fall back on it as unconsciously as we turn on a light. “None of that while you’re studying,” proclaims Mrs. Harris, snapping off the radio in her son’s room as she passes on her way to bed. The son is 17, a brilliant student, and a patient submitter to what he has come to think of as one of his mother’s less defensible weaknesses that it’s not worthwhile to argue about.

Many teen-agers can accept the way their mothers keep at them without being too much bothered by it. They may not figure out why, but if they did they might come up with some pretty soft-hearted feelings about mother. Poor mother! She has been criticized so much for trying to have a life of her own that she often guiltily feels that she must devote herself wholly to

her children. The bridge-playing mother has become a symbol of neglect when, actually, it may be better for a woman, and for her family, if she gets away from home a couple of afternoons a week, whether it's bridge, or P. T. A., or some kind of volunteer or paid work that takes her out.

Sometimes children have a delightfully humorous way of turning the tables on us. (" . . . You want me to wash my neck, don't you? . . . I've just been waiting to hear you say that!") Even when we think we've made mistakes, we have the comfort of knowing that adolescence is a time of growth and flexibility, and that it's not by any means too late to remedy a relationship.

Adolescents still need protection

While our patterns of handling our children often tend to follow those our parents used with us, we have to look out, as well, for the possibility that our own rebellion at over-rigid, or over-solicitous, methods in our childhood may make us lean over backwards to do the opposite. For example, children can stand only so much freedom. So a mother who tries carefully to be permissive, in reaction against a childhood in which she suffered from having every move watched, may make her own children feel she doesn't love them because she seems not to care *what* they do. By setting no limits to their behavior, she puts too much responsibility on them. It's a heavy weight to have to decide what one can or should do or not do. Parents' shoulders need to carry part of that weight, transferring it by degrees.

Does the importance of the relationship that grows up between children and parents seem to take for granted parents of heroic size? Actually, children can forgive quite as much in parents as parents can in children. Many of the disagreements that are so common while boys and girls are trying to break out of the cocoon of childhood vanish once they have their wings and some space to try them in.

Of course girls bicker with their mothers over the way they're to wear their hair or clothes, school marks, going out with boys. If they didn't, they'd either be relying too much on their mothers' guidance, or something sad might lie underneath—the mother's lack of interest and concern, or the girl's inability to take a step toward maturity. Fussing about what foods

"With love and understanding, children can be trusted to live up to the ideals and standards of the home and society. But this love must be accompanied by the kind of authority that teaches a child that there are governing principles that set limits for his behavior."

George S. Stevenson, M. D.: Midcentury White House Conference,
Panel 15.

to eat, what hours to keep, what friends to encourage is a comparatively harmless way of bringing into the open the fleeting antagonism that's only natural between mother and daughter during the transition to adulthood.

We mustn't forget that this necessary breaking away from the old relationship is painful to the girl, too. She is quite as puzzled over her inability to be on the same terms as before with her mother as her mother is. If each understands what the other is going through there won't be so much jangling.

The boy and his mother can't see alike about some things, either. Earlier, she put up with his carelessness about table manners, fingernails and neck. Now, her criticisms are evidences of her jealousy in trying to get her boy to live up to the picture she has in mind of what a gentleman is like. But her son's objections are evidences of a very healthy striving on the part of each boy to be his own man. (Away from home, his manners are likely to be held up as a model by the mother of the boy whose house he's visiting.) To progress beyond an admiring, clinging dependence on his mother is a necessity; inability to pass through this gate wouldn't augur very well for his future relations with a wife.

Each child is different

Being the first child, or the last, or in between—whichever he is must be counted as having made an imprint. Perhaps parents inevitably, in pride over their first-born, watch his early years a little more closely than those of children who come later. Without much knowledge of what children are like, we expect more than he is able to achieve in some ways, less in others. As soon as another child is born, the elder becomes immediately the "big girl" or "big boy," who is expected to give up to the younger and set patterns of good behavior.

Aside from differences in age, there are inborn differences between children's make-up that provoke conflicts, as well as traits that make for jolly teaming-up together. One sister is interested in clothes, the other can't see how anyone can put anything ahead of music. To one brother, absorbed in people, the other's absorption in bugs seem incredible.

Each child has to shove and push a little, in his own interest. How to keep one from being shoved too much by another, who's stouter-hearted or louder-shouting, can account for a few wrinkles on parents' foreheads.

How convenient it would be if parents could be handed blue-prints of the individual abilities and differences inherent in their children, along with birth certificates! Lacking any such helps, they have to rely on close observation, on listening more than on talking. The always surprising uniquenesses in each child call for cherishing, or for gentling and moderating when they seem to be taking unfortunate directions. The way Mary, so quick to catch on, sets her slower sister right might become a disagreeable trait that would hamper Mary's acceptance among her schoolmates. But just because Mary is so quick to get a point, private discussions with her about why people don't like to be corrected, or shown up, may be effective.

Individual differences are of so many sorts. A quiet child and a noisy one in a family create questions for one another, just as a strikingly blond

and very dark one do. Anything that is called attention to unendingly by outsiders is bound to have had an effect. One child, whose brother or sister has to his or her credit an unusual amount of good looks, of musical ability, or any other outstanding feature, may come to feel that he is being discriminated against. Somehow, to some extent, each has been influenced by the comments he has heard.

Sympathetic understanding helps

In the case of differences in mental ability marked enough to have an effect on school work, one child may feel belittled and anxious. Some talent, knack, or skill in the slower child can surely be uncovered and brought into prominence. A boy who gets only average, or even low, grades in school may be very successful in earning money. He needs to be complimented. A girl may be so dependable that her family loads responsibilities on her—never thinking how much praise for her reliability would set her up and take the sting out of her less outstanding success at school.

It all adds up to the need of keeping our eyes wide open to the individuality of each child; to seeking out and encouraging assets that he can be proud of. Twins offer a good example of how easy it is to expect likeness, although actually twins are no more alike than other children in a family, except when they're identical.

A second child, or one in the middle of a family, sometimes gets the short end. "But we love them all alike!" parents insist. Yes, but . . . this other "but" is that the second one often has hand-me-down clothes, a hand-me-down bike, and—just perhaps—a hand-me-down, somewhat matter of fact attitude from his parents when it comes to those thrilling things like a first "formal," or the first loan of the family car to pick up a date. Sometimes parents find it hard to recapture the excitement of their eldest's "first" events. But realizing this, they will be nimble-minded enough to take account of the differences in the emotional setting of each child. There will be ways in which each can be made to feel he is very special, and prized. And a second or third child has some advantages—like always having known what it is to share, take turns, and consider others besides himself.

By the time the youngest child reaches adolescence, his parents may—unconsciously—be pretty unwilling to let him grow up. They can't bear to end the good times they've had by going to church, neighborhood, or Grange affairs as a family. If so, the efforts toward independence that every adolescent must make may seem in his case to be a puzzling kind of fight. He and his problems are bound to be different, because his parents are no longer the same people they were 5 or 10 years ago. The older children in the family may lament, "You never let *us* do that when we were his age!" But on the other hand, parents may catch themselves sticking to customs that are outdated. The youngest sometimes has to protest pretty forcibly in these years of fast-changing manners and mores.

An adolescent often has the privilege of being looked up to by young brothers and sisters. An older boy may find the admiration of a little brother a great source of pride even though he has no notion of how deep

and lasting his influence may be, any more than did Washington's brother Lawrence, whose ideals and character lived on in young George.

Relationships within the family

We often talk about a child's "family" as if it were a unit, a group of people, whether large or small, all of one mind. We speak as if they acted, felt, and thought as a group when we know very well that they don't. Each is strictly an individual, and each acts on the other family members in a different way. Two older brothers may gang up on a younger one, or a younger girl may live in the shadow of her older sister's wit and charm. Mother may be too much like one of her daughters to get along with her as well as with another. Whether or not it's only in father's imagination that Jimmy is his mother's favorite, Jimmy, and mother, and father are all different persons to one another than they would be otherwise. A step-father or step-mother may be a wonderful addition to a family, be merely tolerated, or always be a thorn in the flesh.

Some of the family have different weights and values in family affairs that affect the group as a whole, and each person in it. It may be the father, or the mother, or even a certain child who is the influential member. For although father is taken for granted as the head, he may actually be a mild, unaggressive person who lets mother hold the reins. The difference in impact on a child between a father like this, and one at the other extreme, whose decisions have more weight than the combined opinions of all the rest, can hardly help having noticeable effects. Occasionally, both parents are so bound up in a child that he becomes the hub around which everything revolves, and is the dominating force in the family. When there is no father in the home, the mother has to guard against becoming anxious and even over-protective, out of her yearning to make up for the child's loss.

Each one of the adults reflects, too, the family in which he or she grew up. So that grandmother and grandfather are often on the scene, sometimes in person, but always in their influence on the children's parents. A mother's insistence on her children's orderliness may hark back to her

"It is from and through father that the entire family should receive a steadiness of purpose, an enthusiasm of interest, a sense of justice and fair play, an awareness of the world's problems, and an inspiration to be useful, friendly, and a participant in making the world a better place to live in."

O. Spurgeon English, M. D., and Constance Foster: *Fathers Are Parents, Too.*

New York: Putnam, 1951—p. xL.

childhood days, in which emphasis was so strong on this as to make it second nature for her. A penny-pinching attitude which children find hard to reconcile with a well-to-do father, may have had its origin in the necessity for scrimping that clouded his boyhood.

In small families the impacts of one personality on another may be sharper because of the fewer number in the home. In a large family parents may not tend to be quite so overconcerned as sometimes comes about when there's just one child. At present we know very little about the network of relationships within a family. But we can be certain that it is a tangle, with the strings pulling in more directions than there are people.

Family customs differ

Of course children influence their parents, as well as being influenced by them. If this is a matter for thought in the typical American family—if there is one—how much more it needs attention in the life of the adolescent whose parents have only recently come to the United States, and have not yet absorbed many of the widely prevailing customs and attitudes. Many of our adolescents grow up in homes where English is not the commonly spoken language. Whether their parents have come from Japan or Mexico, or their grandparents from Finland or Italy, family patterns very different in character formed the childhood background for such adolescents. In addition to the usual number of stresses they must face, these young people have the problem of the differences between their parents' attitudes and habits and those with which they have become familiar through school associations and playmates. Lena's mother may object to her wearing a headscarf because she thinks of it as a peasant custom in the country she came from. Tony may be embarrassed about bringing friends home because the foods they will be offered are not the ones his friends are used to.

Parents of children in neighborhoods including people with a variety of backgrounds can do a great deal to ease strains by being alert to the contributions to our country's culture that come from many sources. The interesting foods, the dances, the music and the handicrafts that are part of a special heritage can serve as bridges between different groups. Some communities have made use of these riches by such activities as Festivals of Nations, where such things as Czech dances, Scandinavian music and booths displaying Italian textiles and Greek pastries furnish enjoyment for family groups of all ages and backgrounds.

Parents can't pick out definitely in an adolescent the bits of his personality that represent his relations with the different members of his family, and the effects of their way of life. But knowledge that such influences are present should keep us sharply aware of the need of trying to fit our expectations of each child in with his own individual experiences and sensitivities.

Getting used to physical changes



The period of rapid growth preceding adolescence is often spoken of as an “awkward” period. Why, it seems reasonable to wonder, should a person be any more clumsy or gawky at one stage of his growth than another?

Perhaps there is good reason for applying such an epithet, but it's hardly the reason so often given. Boys and girls don't fall over their own feet, blush, and drop things because they're growing so fast, or so unevenly. Though the parts of the body don't all grow at the same rate, they still grow the way nature intended they should. When height is being rapidly added to there may be a time when gains in motor development seem to stand still. But lack of gain in coordination at this time isn't *because* of physical growth; like other bodily functions, such gains have different rates of growth at different times. Any physical awkwardness when a young person is growing fast is likely to be associated with his new self-awareness. It is much more a matter of social awkwardness than of lack of skill in managing his body. Given a setting in which a boy is unselfconscious—when he's swimming or driving a hayrake, for example—he has no trouble making his muscles work together. But if he can't have his clothes replaced as fast as he grows out of them, or if constant comments are made about his big feet, or long arms, he may feel awkward indeed in group situations.

Many kinds of growth are taking place

Physical growth can't be dealt with alone. It's only one part of a complex process that includes emotional, social, and mental unfolding, as well. In fact, there are so many new things happening as a boy or girl approaches adolescence that it is easy to see how the old idea of a “rebirth” at this time came about. But this old view put too much emphasis on what goes on inside a child, and too little on the effects of things outside him—the surrounding culture in which he is living.

The rapid growth and other changes that are taking place are not quite like anything that has occurred before. While a boy and girl are stretching up and filling out, and arriving at sexual maturity, their interests and needs gradually change, grow, and deepen, too. The boy who has been an absorbed follower of certain comic strips begins to look at them for a different reason: he is interested in trying to draw one himself. The girl who has created many clothes for her dolls turns to devising accessories for her own costumes. School subjects that have been looked on indifferently before may become absorbing, or heartily disliked. Both boy and girl may become sharply critical of their features, or build, or coloring as a new interest in appearance develops.

In the midst of all this change that's going on, older children are sometimes pretty much bewildered. Their new feelings take some getting used to. Sometimes they'd prefer to cling to childhood, especially when they're expected to act grown up in ways they find hard to accept. Acting your age isn't easy when you don't know just what your age is! You're "too young to stay out so late," but you're "too old to be tormenting your little brother," or "acting like such a tomboy."

The many parts and organs of the body do not develop at the same pace. Bones, muscles, heart, nervous system, and all the rest of the members of this complicated organism have their own timing. The nervous system grows fast and the genital organs very slowly in childhood. The legs grow slowly in early childhood, and very fast when adolescence is approaching. Muscles grow a lot in size during childhood, but most of their growth in weight comes much later.

Because of the uneven way in which growth takes place, it is hard to say how "old" a child is. Not in years, of course, for we have his birth-date to go by. But there are other kinds of age than chronological age—the age of his skeleton, his mental age, and his physiological maturity, and—not least—his emotional maturity, so much harder to measure than the strictly physical.

Though there's no way of separating physical changes from the others that are going on, it is convenient to speak about them individually. The whole course of pubescence usually covers at least two years, and may be somewhat longer.

Differences between boys' and girls' growth

One of the striking things about the more rapid physical growth that children go through as pre-adolescents is its different timing in boys and in girls.

Suddenly to be taller than the boys in their room at school can be a confusing thing for girls. It will be a lot less so if they know that this is the normal course of growth. Why, nobody is sure. But from birth on, the girl, though smaller and lighter on the average than the same-aged boy, is ahead of him in physiological development. At birth, she is about a month advanced; at 12, somewhere between 1 and 3 years more mature, the average being about 2 years.

So there is nothing surprising in her pushing ahead into adolescence before the boy of corresponding age is quite ready to do so. Her gain in height will probably be the most noticeable way in which her body calls attention to the approach of maturity, although her hips have already begun to broaden a bit, and her breasts to develop. Between 11 and 13 or 14, girls become taller than boys for the only time in their lives. (Remember, individuals don't always follow the rule.) By 15 the boys have overtaken them. Boys keep on adding to their height longer than girls. After they are 16, girls grow little, if any, taller; while boys may continue to add a small amount to their height into their early twenties. The twelfth year in girls and the fourteenth year in boys are most often those in which the greatest gain in height is made.

In weight, too, girls surpass boys for a time. From 12 to 15, girls outweigh boys, who then take over again and from 16 on are heavier than the girls of the same age, just as they were at birth and in their early years. Girls begin a noticeable weight gain by 11, gain rather fast until 16, and very little after 18. Boys, on the other hand, after slow, fairly steady gains in weight at about 12, gain faster from then through about 16, and continue to make smaller gains up to 20. Of course these figures apply to averages for a large number of children, and so may come quite far from applying to an individual boy or girl.

Part of the weight gain that comes with adolescence is due to growth of the muscles. Boys almost double their strength between 12 and 16 years on this account. Most boys are physically very active at this time, when their muscles are enlarging and strengthening so fast.

The way children's bones are growing is closely related to other ways they are developing, particularly to the timing of their sexual maturation. Consequently, study of the skeletal maturity of a child sometimes helps to explain other things about him or her. For example, when X-rays of the bones reveal that a boy is still quite far from reaching puberty, his lack of interest in some of the activities in which many other boys of his chronological age engage becomes easier to understand.

Children who are tall in the years between 6 and 10 may, on the whole, be expected to be tall at maturity, though there are obviously exceptions

“People are inclined to think of maturity as a definite state to be reached much as if it were the end of a journey. It would be better to think of it as an ever-receding goal toward which we begin to march at birth and go on to the end of life.”

Douglas A. Thom, M. D.: Guiding the Adolescent.
Children's Bureau, 1933. (Out of print.)

to this general rule. Boys who are sturdily built, with broad hips, and who are good at skills that take physical strength, often mature early. Those who tend to be smaller, slimmer, and less outstanding in athletic ability are likely to have their growth spurt late.

Children who have been relatively short before puberty very rarely climb into the group of tall children when they make their pubertal gains in height, nor do the tall ones get less tall in comparison with other children than they were before. However, growth at this time does serve to even things up in a way, so that early- and late-maturing children end up appearing less outstandingly "different" from the group. Children who mature late, though they may have been short in comparison with others of their years, tend to catch up once they start to grow, because they tend to keep on growing longer than the early-maturing group. Children can push forward into adolescence early, or late, and still be developing perfectly normally. If they seem to be different from the average, they need to be assured by their parents that it's quite all right. If completely accepted at home, they feel more comfortable about their difference.

Responsible in great part for these height and weight changes and other physiological developments are the endocrine glands. Their secretions, or hormones, influence the changes coming about during adolescence, if they do not completely govern them. They serve as a team; when one is not working right, the others may be affected, too.

Present-day children are taller and heavier than those of a generation or two back; for example, both white and Negro boys in the United States today are 6 to 8 percent taller and 12 to 15 percent heavier than were boys half a century ago. Children also tend to become mature sexually at a little earlier age. It seems probable that both these things are associated with the better nutritional and health care children get today.

Growth in size and sexual development both seem to be affected by long-continued undernutrition. Children who have plenty of food, and desirable kinds of food, mature earlier than those whose diets are less satisfactory.

How girls develop

Girls who are well nourished and in good physical condition, whose homes and living conditions are above average, tend to mature somewhat earlier than those in less favorable surroundings. Also, a moderate climate favors earlier maturation than either a very hot or a very cold climate.

The largest number of girls first menstruate when 13, although a good many do so at 12. An occasional girl has her first menstrual period as early as 9 or 10. Very few girls begin to menstruate more than 2 years before or 5 years after the average age of 13. It is a rare girl who has not menstruated by the time she is 16. However, there is nothing abnormal in such comparatively late maturation, or in its early arrival at 10 or 11. About 3 percent of girls begin to menstruate before 11, and another 3 percent after 15.

For a while, menstrual periods are usually irregular, with wide gaps between. From this, and other evidence, it is concluded that the appearance

of menstruation does not necessarily mean the girl is sexually mature, in the sense of ovulating (producing eggs) and being able to bear a child. Conception extremely rarely occurs during the first year of menstruation. The length of time the menstrual flow lasts is different in different individuals. In younger girls it may last a day or so longer than the $4\frac{1}{2}$ days which is an average to be expected of young adult women. Some girls, once the menses are established, menstruate a little oftener than every 28 days, some a little less often. Few have an absolutely regular cycle, now or later.

In addition to the appearance of menstruation, related, or secondary, sex characteristics show up. Among them are the development of the breasts, and a gradual rounding of the figure into curves that mark departure from little-girlhood. Along with these is rapid growth of the sex organs—the vagina, uterus, fallopian tubes and the ovaries that will produce eggs throughout the child-bearing years.

How boys develop

In the boy outward bodily changes, such as the appearance of pubic hair, are usually relied on to mark his passage into adolescence, for he has no special function, like menstruation, whose appearance can easily be dated. The finding of sperm cells in the urine would be conclusive evidence of a boy's sexual maturity. But the time when this occurs is hard to determine without the bother of frequent examination, so other signs are counted on: the need for shaving, the lowering of the voice, which comes late in the period of pubescence, often in the fifteenth year, the broadening and thickening of neck and shoulders, and the increased growth of the genital organs.

The largest group of boys can be expected to reach puberty at about 14 or 15, which is a year or 2 earlier than would have been the case 50 years ago. They will have begun their spurt in height about 6 months earlier than their pubescent gain in weight. By $13\frac{1}{2}$, about 35 percent of boys will be going through the changes that lead to sexual maturation; at $15\frac{1}{2}$, 60 percent of boys will have passed into adolescence, and by $17\frac{1}{2}$ years, over 90 percent will have done so.

In both girls and boys, the approach of adolescence is marked by the appearance and development of hair in the pubic region. Though that is one of the less important happenings of the period, "puberty" takes its name from it, probably because it is so easily observable a change. Fine and uncolored at first, this pubic hair is later succeeded by coarser, darker hair which becomes kinky. While the pubic hair is growing denser, hair begins to appear in the armpits.

In the boy, hair also begins soon after to appear on the face, where it first occurs as down on the upper lip, and gradually spreads and coarsens, until shaving becomes necessary. Not until much later in adolescence does hair begin to come on the chest, and this is much more marked in some boys than others.

The hairline on a boy's forehead often undergoes a change during adolescence. Where it formed a curve in childhood, two indentations begin to show up, so that the hairline appears to be receding a little at the sides of the forehead.

At puberty, in both boys and girls, the sweat glands become more active, as do the sebaceous glands, that supply oil to the skin and hair. Over-activity of these latter glands may be one factor of the acne that is the scourge of some girls and more boys during adolescence. (See p. 91 for treatment of acne.)

How parents can help

The wide differences in ages at which children reach sexual maturity, and experience all the changes that go with it, point out unmistakably the need for preparing them for what will happen. Even then, some aspects of adolescence are sure to be surprising, and to pose some emotional problems. Remaining small longer than most of his age do, or becoming excessively tall in comparison with them, becoming fat all of a sudden, having a squeaky voice for months on end are things that can't be taken lightly by a child.

Parents can do children few greater services than by seeing to it that they do not become puzzled or ashamed about things that are quite normal phases of development. Confusing though they may be for a time, most of the irregularities of growth will be ironed out. Boys and girls need the reassurance of being told this.

Four 12-year-olds—1 girl and 3 boys—may be in the same room at school, but their differences in size and development may be so great as to stand out glaringly. The girl, let us say, has two of the characteristics that trouble many girls of her age: both tallness and heaviness. All 3 boys are shorter than the girl. The littlest boy probably worries about his small size, but he does not have fatness as an added concern, as some of the other boys in his class are likely to have. Boys of the same age in years may be as far as 5 years apart physiologically, during puberty, and all be growing normally.

Boys, particularly, feel inferior if they haven't the rugged physique which they associate with manliness. This quality is far more prized than good looks. To be able to hold one's own from a physical point of view is of great importance, and the boy who can't show this prowess is likely to be a forgotten man, temporarily, among his peers. If he is small, weak, or late maturing he may for a while lose out on friendships. He has to be "good at" the things the majority of boys are doing, or suffer an eclipse until he, too, becomes able to shine in some way.

Among girls, being too fat or too tall take precedence as hated conditions. The dieting common among girls at this period reveals how much they care about "looks." Boys are accepted by other boys on a quite different basis than good looks. But a girl can't fall back on her physical strength to win friends. She must look attractive, to be noticed with favor by either sex. A girl who becomes too plump at 12 or 13 needs the comfort of knowing that in all likelihood this is only temporary, and that she'll thin out later.

Even when development is going on in the most normal fashion, there are still ways in which it may be disturbing. Feet are apt to seem big—too big—for a while. Noses, mouths, chins all change a good deal before faces

settle down into the proportions they will have in adult life. Boys may be unnecessarily conscious of a big nose, not realizing that their other features will grow, too, making it less conspicuous. Ears that stand out, hair that is unruly or thin, an Adam's apple that is prominent—any one of these things can cause suffering as young people look at themselves critically for the first time. Freckles, or a mole that has gone unnoticed before, seem suddenly distressingly conspicuous. The chances are, a boy or girl won't mention such things to parents, and parents certainly aren't going to pull long faces, and put ideas into their children's heads. On the other hand, some parents mistakenly cling to the notion that praising children's appearance makes them vain. Handicaps, real or imagined, can be pushed into the background if a child's good features are played up.

A girl who is unprepared for menstruation or a boy who has not been told about seminal emissions can be made very fearful when these things come about.

It is to be hoped that mothers have prepared their daughters for the occurrence of menstruation, explaining its purpose in relation to child-bearing and advising them how to care for themselves during monthly periods. It is important for girls to know that menstruation is almost always irregular at first, also, that it need not interfere with usual daily activities, like bathing, swimming, and exercise in general.

Most modern girls are too healthy and active to be taken in by such old-fashioned notions as that a girl is "sick" during her menstrual periods. But an occasional girl whose mother was brought up expecting to be indisposed every month may pick up her mother's attitude without being conscious of it. A girl who is happy about becoming a woman will accept menstruation as a natural part of growing into womanhood. But in a girl who resents her femininity, and whose relations with her mother have not been so happy that she can identify herself with her mother, menstruation may be troublesome, both emotionally and physically.

Any girl whose menstrual periods are a source of annoying discomfort should have the benefit of advice from a physician who understands the treatment of such difficulties.

Reassurance is important

Girls should be given some understanding of their sex reactions. They should be reassured, for instance, regarding the vaginal discharge they may experience in situations that are in some way sexually stimulating. They should also have some understanding of the sex tension and urge which, though less obvious and less clearly recognized than in the boy, they may feel.

A father can be most helpful by giving clear, frank information to his son. He should prepare him to expect an occasional discharge of semen, likely to occur during sleep, explaining that this is nature's way of taking care of his glandular activity until he should be physically, economically, and socially ready to assume the responsibility of marriage. He can assure him that these nocturnal emissions, as well as the involuntary erections he may experience either in dreams or in sexually exciting situations, are

perfectly natural occurrences about which he should not be disturbed. (For a fuller discussion of the hesitation children who are already passing through the pubertal changes often feel about talking with their parents, see "Dealing With New Impulses," pp. 77-78.)

Both boys and girls should be told not only about the organs and processes of reproduction in their own sex, but also about those of the other sex. Above all, young people should feel free to ask questions and consult their parents about any feelings or experiences which they find puzzling or disturbing.

They need to have guidance

Many parents recognize that helping their children understand and be ready for adolescence is their job, but fail to think of this as a long-time type of education, that begins with a child's first questions, and continues and expands as his needs grow. Actually, it is much easier to talk over with children matters about sexual maturation before they become emotionally involved. A boy who at 10 feels free to talk over anything with his father may wonder himself why he withdraws, and feels hesitant about remaining close to his father at 13. The experience of a girl with her mother may be similar. Once a child is fumbling with his need of emancipating himself from his parents, his unwillingness to share his questions with them may be a sort of hidden reef, that neither he nor they are quite aware of. In order for him to become independent, it is necessary for his relations with them to change.

Modern parents have pretty well rid themselves of the old inability to talk frankly with their children, but many still need to be reminded that "telling" a child is not all, that building up attitudes is not a matter of one "heart to heart" talk. And now that puberty is being reached sooner than it used to be, children also need more complete background at earlier ages than before.

Boys and girls can hardly expect to know how to find good sources of information, and so may have to depend on poor or false ones. Their parents can prevent this by seeing to it that their sons and daughters have full and accurate knowledge, and the example of a healthy outlook.

Fortunately, more and more parents are cooperating with schools, churches, and youth organizations in their efforts to see that those children whose parents have felt unable to give wholesome guidance get some help. The selection and preparation of teachers who are to give courses in education for family living is a matter of first importance, and one about which parents cannot afford to be indifferent. Such teachers should be calm, understanding people who are themselves well-adjusted to life.

The ways in which parents give information and guidance are as important as the facts they offer, if not more so. Those whose own upbringing did not include desirable counseling may find themselves blocked by their own feelings and pass this on to their children. Parents who have such feelings of inadequacy can do a lot toward freeing themselves by reading, and joining with groups of other parents to discuss their problems. Bringing

things into the light of day, examining into the reasons for attitudes and feelings can do much toward shaking the hold of old experiences, emotions, and sensitivities.

Some mothers and fathers fall back on giving youngsters a book or pamphlet, which doesn't do the trick. But reading the same material with a boy or girl may help. To say, "I wish I had known this at your age," puts parent and child on a more even footing, and opens the way for discussing points that are not clear or need fuller explanation.



Breaking away from childhood

“John! John! Time to get up or you’ll be late for work!” Mrs. Grady gives a gentle push at the jumble of bed clothes of which 17-year-old John is presumably a part. No movement or grunt rewards her, as she goes on through John’s room into the bathroom. Coming through on her way downstairs she shakes him again, and with a groan, John burrows deeper into the blankets.

Downstairs, John’s father greets her with an impatient grumble. “Why can’t that boy ever get up on time? If he’s so anxious to sleep, why doesn’t he go to bed at night instead of fooling around in the basement till all hours?” Mr. Grady picks up his lunch box and leaves, still mumbling irritably.

This is almost a daily happening at the Grady’s. When Mrs. Grady finally hurries John off in the morning she grasps at the comfort of a sip of coffee before the younger children come clamoring down for breakfast. And in thousands of other homes, something very like this scene is taking place.

Is John irresponsible for his years? Should he still be depending on his mother to get him started for the day? He’s very seldom actually late at the filling station where he’s a helper, but it’s because of his mother’s urging and pushing.

Let’s consider some of the possible reasons for John’s annoying behavior. For there is always meaning back of a boy’s actions, whether he’s 7 or 17.

What does John's behavior mean

First of all, it's only when the rest of the family gets to sleep that John has any privacy in his room. That room was rigged up for him by partitioning off part of the upstairs hall, and everyone in the house passes through it to get to the bathroom. Why should John want to go to bed until things have settled down, and his room isn't being used as a passageway? In the basement, after the small fry have gone to bed, he has the place to himself. Adolescents cherish the hours they have to themselves, and in many families those hours have to be contrived. Is it strange that the privacy of sleep is sometimes hard to give up?

Perhaps there's another reason John clings to the refuge of sleep. He is almost the only boy of his group who is no longer in school. Glad as he was to leave school, where he was irked over lessons that seemed to have little to do with his life, might we not guess that he has some hankering to be a little closer to the boys with whom he grew up? Their interests and his seem to be getting farther apart, and while John never voices any regret at home, it may not be out of line to suspect he has some such feeling and that coming awake again in the morning means he again has to face his dissatisfaction.

One thing that supports this idea is the importance John attaches to clothes. Now that he's earning, most of what he doesn't turn back to the family for his board is spent on clothes. He has become very particular about his appearance, when he goes out evenings. The length of time he spends on such things as grooming his hair and selecting a tie is another source of irritation to his father. (The fussiness with which John rejects a shirt that isn't ironed to suit him may not be any greater than Mr. Grady's at the same age, but he, unfortunately, has forgotten that.) John wants, obviously, to appear just as well or a little better dressed than the other fellows. He can hold his own there, even if he can't in school subjects.

But what about John's depending on his mother to get him up? Surely a 17-year-old should be a self-starter? Here again, the surrounding circumstances have to be looked into. Isn't it possible that John gets some pleasure from feeling that his mother has him on her mind? Perhaps this is one of the few times that she really pays him attention. His two young sisters claim a lot of her time. What with discussions of what to wear and when, and settling squabbles between them over taking each other's sweaters and belts and socks, Mrs. Grady may seem to John to be thinking a lot more about them than about him. To cling to the childhood practice of being coaxed into getting his day started may be one way he's showing the pull that's always present in an adolescent's life—the pull between wanting to be grown up and longing to continue in the care-free period when someone else directs your life for you. Let's not be too critical of John's reluctance to get up.

Poor Mrs. Grady! She may not be aware of it, but she's pulled in different directions, too. She has a vague feeling that John shouldn't be relying on her to get him up, but it's subtly pleasant to feel he's still her little boy. As her first-born, she would probably admit he holds a very special place in her life. In her heart she feels confident that if John were

not under the family roof he'd be quickly responsive to his alarm clock. She knows he's reliable on the job, and she's seldom known an hour's worry over him. It's his father's attitude that bothers her.

What about Mr. Grady's irritation? Here, too, there's meaning. Could it be that he would like to have his wife give him her undivided attention in the morning, and not have John on her mind? Maybe he's the least bit jealous of this young fellow who's so fast growing, both in size and in achievements, out of the time when dictatorial handling is possible? Mr. Grady's father wasn't easy going, with him, and the pattern of his early lifetime may be imprinted on his mind, much as he disliked it himself. If only he could reassure himself that this will pass!

It would be easy to say, "If Mrs. Grady had begun early to make John responsible for getting himself up, the present problem wouldn't exist." But it might not be true; the younger children are, the more "raring to go" they're likely to be in the morning. It isn't merely a question of setting up habits, for habits may give way to others, as growth and change occur.

Parents can help a lot by giving thought to which of the things that crop up, like this, are important, and which are of less moment. If all along, this weighing of matters has been the rule, there can be a calmer acceptance of many of the mole-hills of adolescent behavior, because some of the things that could become mountains have been noted earlier.

The irritation John's father feels may not actually have much to do with John's reluctance to get up. It may be related to the fact that for several years now, John has been showing less deference to his father's ideas. It started when John was 12 or so. He began to question his father's opinion about who would win the World Series, something about which Mr. Grady thought he knew much more than his son. This "impudence" of having his own opinions has spread to many areas in the years since.

Democracy begins at home

Why is it so hard for us to grant that our children may have opinions, ideas, knowledge as good as our own? We need to grow too, in order to meet the changes in our children. The more we have encouraged inde-

"Often what they mean by independence is that he should take more initiative in doing what they wish him to do. But what they wish is rarely very clear. They expect him to be 'grown up' in the sense of possessing all the virtues parents value, and yet to lack all the vices usually tolerated by adults in one another."

Irene Josselyn, M. D.: Social Pressures of Adolescence.
Social Casework, 33: 187-193, 1952—p. 188.

pendent thinking and action earlier, the less of a scare we'll get when the proud young adolescent flutters his wings, teetering on the edge of the home nest. It might be a good idea to get into the habit of talking over with our children some of the things about which they are likely to have as strong feelings as we do. There are fewer arguments and misunderstandings when we make an effort not to seem dictatorial. The shift in philosophy to a democratic way of having everyone in on decisions, instead of having orders come from above, is a very pleasant feature of our present-day family life.

Here are some of the questions about which high school age young people tell us there is apt to be disagreement between them and their parents, in the order of their frequency: going out on school nights, the time you get home at night, grades at school, using the family car, choosing friends, spending money, jobs at home.

Not all boys and girls have many of these clashes, let's remember. Of 10,000 high-schoolers questioned, over half said they believed their parents understood their problems. But it's hard to imagine a family in which some of these matters don't occasionally come up for discussion.

In fact, if there aren't any issues between a young person and his parents, he has to *make* some! Somehow, he's got to break away, to assert his independence, even under the mildest of parental guidance. It would be disappointing not to have any one resist you when you're trying to demonstrate your ability to make your own decisions. In such cases, it may be in trivial, even funny, ways that a teen-ager picks out things to cause some parental comment. It may be wild adornment or ways of wearing clothes—anything to keep from being sober and conservative. It may be the bright paint that's slapped on that old car that the parents hate to admit belongs in front of their house. It may be hit-or-miss resistance to any suggestion parents make, a girl's fussing over food, a boy's objections to places his folks want him to go, or books they suggest he read—anything to have a little practice in asserting himself.

But teen-agers count on their parents asserting themselves, too. Young people not only need limits; they like them, and have been known to invent regulations their parents have overlooked making. Nancy almost brags about her parents' request that she phone them if she's going to be later getting home than she told them she expected to be. But such parents *request*; they don't demand. Children need to know where their parents stand. They can take strictness (mixed with love) better than they can take inconsistency. To find themselves blamed one day for something that is overlooked another is like living on a see-saw. ("Got your old man under control, have you?" bantered some one when Joe turned away from the telephone. He had called up his father to announce that the group he was driving home wanted to stay for a late show. "Naw," said Joe, sheepish but relieved, "He says, 'you get home here pronto!'")

The temptation to hold a tight rein

When they begin to see their children strike out for a little more independence some parents are frightened into clamping down hard. It's the same reaction that tempts a scared driver into stepping on his brake when

he hits an icy spot on the road, and as dangerous. When Mrs. Tonelli disapproves of a girl her daughter is running around with, and says, "Ann, you're *not* to go to her house any more" she makes it almost obligatory for Ann to go.

The young of any species must venture, try out their wings, or their legs, or their will. This girl must test the meaning of her mother's prohibition, find out how important it is to her. If, on the other hand, her mother, having good reason to be convinced of the unwholesomeness of the association, made a point of encouraging the girls to meet in Ann's home, the unsuitable friendship would have a chance to wear itself out. When no obstacle is raised, no spark of antagonism is set off. In the early teens, friendships are rarely made for good and all. But under prohibition, Ann's own judgment and standards may be obscured by emotion.

Ted is a motherless boy whose father is intent on bringing his boy up right. When Ted started staying out later on Saturday nights than he had hitherto been allowed to, his father thought, "Here's where I must get hard-boiled. If I go too easy, he'll take advantage of me." So it was with a pretty severe "Where have you been?" that he greeted Ted's next late arrival. "Oh, around," said Ted, in duty bound to act unconcerned. This to his father sounded like impudence (though he knew very well that Ted had only been at the neighborhood movie or the drugstore, or that the group's gas money had lasted longer than usual.)

First thing they knew, hot words had flown back and forth, and the chance was lost for a peaceable discussion of the *real* problem. The real problem was two-pronged: one, that Ted's father had neglected to allow for Ted's need to help decide on a reasonable hour for him to get home; two, that Ted felt a troubled urge to see how far he could go in setting his will against his father's. To have the time arbitrarily set gave him no chance to have practice in using his judgment. What is often called "adolescent rebellion" is termed that only for want of a better word. When a boy lives a rather tame urban life, it is greatly to be wondered at that he so often goes in for rough sports, in which there are considerable elements of danger, or itches to take risks by fast driving? It is the rare boy indeed who has a chance at exploits like those his great grandfathers had in the days of Daniel Boone or Kit Carson. But parents could be less timid about allowing overnight camping at 12, and canoe trips at 16 or so. Somehow, a boy has to convince his parents—and himself—that he's not afraid of danger.

"There is great comfort in knowing that those who love you love you enough to take the responsibility for marking out the permissible."

Thornton Wilder: *The Ides of March*.
New York: Harper, 1948—p. 194.

The thicker and tougher the obstacles put in his path, the wilder and more erratic his attempts to scale them become.

This is one of the reasons why thoughtful parents recognize that the time for physical restraints and physical punishment is past. To shut a boy up in his room is to dare him to get out the window. To use physical violence is to outrage his sense of dignity and personal worth. A father feels threatened when his authority is questioned. But when difficult issues arise, parents make more headway by relying on a boy's ability to listen to reason, after a "cooling-off" period, and his willingness to compromise a little if they will, than by the use of force or command.

Perhaps we can better understand some of the aggressive behavior that puzzles us in young delinquents we hear about, if we are aware that such acts may in part be the outcome of mistaken attempts at discipline.

What unruly behavior suggests

When boys and girls make the mistake of not behaving according to the rules of the society they live in, when they break out of bounds and do foolish and wild things, we can only look upon their acts as warnings—warnings of which those nearest to the child have had previous notice, but which they did not catch on to. Such misbehavior often serves to point out that there have been misunderstandings, failures to observe needs, or, possibly, unconsciously hostile attitudes in adults.

Sometimes, parents' over-watchfulness comes about because of their own unrecognized, buried fears. A good example is the worry that parents often feel over masturbation—a worry that harks back to the dread aroused in their own adolescence. Plagued in his own youth by fears, the parent may never have got rid of his own adolescent confusion.

He may have read and heard hundreds of times that masturbation is so nearly universal as to be considered a normal, and if handled wisely, a passing, phase in the process of growing up. But, such was his own emotional turmoil over it that he never completely overcame his distress about it.

A parent so influenced may, by his veiled reference to masturbation, or by sounding off against it, set up a disturbance in his son's emotions. The adolescent may feel ashamed of a practice that he suspects is frowned on. Parental reproaches do not build self-respect. What such a young person needs is help in becoming more mature, not destructive criticism that lowers his belief in his own ability to grow up. He should have reassurance that the ill-effect of masturbation is the shame and self-defeat he feels, not the mental ills that he may have read or heard result from it.

False ideas are still commonly making the rounds among adolescents, and they need to be offset by truthful, unbiased discussion of the problem. If masturbation has reached the stage of becoming a "problem," the boy needs help in straightening out the troubles that exist in his emotional life. Does he feel inferior in some way? Is he having difficulty in making friends? Does he lack opportunities for pleasant social experiences with girls? Is he perhaps torn by conflict that is going on between his parents? Is he unable to feel pride in his family, or in his own achievements? It

is questions such as these that should be looked into. The excessive masturbation is evidence that he has other problems that need to be solved.

While masturbation is not by any means limited to boys, most studies have indicated that it is rather less frequent in girls. But girls need help in withstanding pressures and overcoming their fears or lack of knowledge in relation to sex quite as much as boys.

A long way between rungs on the ladder

While a child is a child, and there's no doubt about it, he has a certain place in his family, and knows it. All around him he sees other children whose lives proceed pretty much on the same general plan as his—school, neighborhood play, Sunday school, movies and radio, TV and comics, clothes their parents choose. Younger boys and girls alike accept the idea that many things are going to be settled for them. Though each family has its own rules and ways, the parents' direction is taken for granted.

And then comes the transition. Not for years will these older children be men and women, but they're no longer children. Rather abruptly they feel that their old status has ended. But no new one takes its place. Teenagers find it hard to get their bearings. Their elders' society practically says, "You've got to wait. We can't recognize you yet, or take you in on our affairs. Get ready—here are the schoolrooms, just sit down here and prepare yourselves for being grown up. . . . No, thank you, there's no way you can help now."

So youngsters are left in the unenviable position of being "off with the old" but without any clear rules about the new. What happens? In order to find a niche they can fit into they have to get together and think up a code of behavior of their own. In great part, their fads are harmless new wrinkles that are adopted widely, dying out to give place to new ones. The in-between stage young adolescents find themselves in makes them depend on each other more, and in more ways, than they did earlier or will later. A new fad in clothes spreads as fast as the water from an overturned glass. The slang of the moment flies from one end of the country to the other by

"The group of contemporaries is uncompromising in its demands that the adolescent conform to its standards of behavior and belief. It offers him in return a security in group belongingness and in collective responsibility at a time when he is abandoning childhood relationships and reorienting himself in terms of mature goals."

Peter Blos: *The Adolescent Personality*.
New York: Appleton-Century, 1941—pp. 253-254.

some special form of wireless. Girls seek the solidarity and backing of cliques, and boys of like-minded gangs. "Everyone else is allowed to! Why can't I?" is the slogan familiar to every family with a teen-ager in it.

The peer group, the group made up of his equals—that's the fraternity whose constitution and bylaws win allegiance while the young adolescent is trying to find himself. No longer willing to accept without question the ideas and opinions of parents, who are beginning to be seen as sadly human and fallible, the boy and girl turn for approval of their thoughts and feelings to those who can share them. Eager for help in establishing themselves as something other than hangers-on of their parents, they also grasp at the hands of any teachers or leaders or slightly older youth whose smile is sympathetic rather than tolerant.

Need of backing by their age group

But their prime allegiance is to their own group. Perhaps they fall back on their peers for support because they get so little of it elsewhere. Living in a kind of marginal world in which they don't get enough respect from the adult world, where their contribution is not asked, they form a society of their own. To belong is of serious importance. Those who do not succeed in belonging now may find it harder, as time goes on, to make contacts and fit in socially. Archie's father, by being active in the new recreation center, pulls his shy son into helping make equipment, along with other boys of his age. Mrs. Jones, in getting her son and daughter to round up young people to serve at a church supper she's helping to plan, does more than get the work done: she assures all these boys and girls of feeling comfortable at the affair because they'll be busy.

We can also let group allegiance work for us or against us. (Make the group welcome, provide plenty of ginger ale, and stay out from underfoot.)

The need for parents' understanding of this adolescent urge goes without saying. Misunderstanding may lead to a real rift. Martha's mother, for example, saw something wrong with almost every girl her daughter brought home. One was too slangy, another showed her careless bringing up by her poor manners. One girl caused suspicion by what seemed to Mrs. Norman to be a kind of sly secretiveness. More and more Martha, hating to hear her mother's objections to her friends, took to meeting them outside. Why lay herself open to painful scenes and fault-finding? Now Mrs. Norman rarely meets Martha's friends. Her daughter is away from home more and more and her mother, not knowing the friends she now has, is disturbed because she doesn't know where Martha is half the time.

In another family, where rules are strict about hours for study—so much so that Mrs. Lebano makes no bones about turning her son's friends away from the door, saying, "He has to study"—there are also hours for gaiety, and Mrs. Lebano is never too tired to play the piano while the boys and their friends sing. Firm about hours for study, she can be relaxed about Joe's companions because she makes a point of knowing them.

Still another mother doesn't understand what the boys talk about so much "when they spend time foolishly, going from one place to another and sitting around talking." Yes, to her their talk seems foolish. But the boy and

girl who belong to groups, and clubs, who have music and sports and movies to "hash over" and who take an active interest in being with others instead of alone a great deal are showing, by their ability to mingle freely and be wanted by others, an adjustment that the lonely one may ache, underneath, to share. (There is a great difference between being alone because of lack of friends, and being alone because of a need for privacy or in order to have time for strongly individual pursuits. See p. 75.) The friendly family, which has been indulgent about having a clutter of children under foot, will also have them around during the years when lack of a place to foregather at home forces some adolescents into questionable surroundings.

Building values and ideals

As adolescents' minds mature, and their horizons broaden, they begin really to think about the religious beliefs that they have absorbed so naturally from their parents. These teachings of their parents, and of their church, become something of intimate personal concern, now that they are old enough to deal with abstract ideas. Before, it was a matter of trusting their parents. Now, their concepts of God, of good and evil, and of the soul, while still influenced greatly by the type of guidance they have received, come in for wonderment and pondering. They themselves point out that they have problems, and they need sympathetic help in connection with them. Studies show that as they get older, fewer teen-agers seem to be interested in attending church. This, as they themselves agree, cannot be taken as a lack of interest in religion. Rather, it points to the possibility that the church does not always meet the adolescent's need. Many churches are heeding this evidence of disappointment, and are reexamining their offerings.

Anyone who has a chance to deal intimately with teen-agers, who has heard them discussing their problems and expressing their views, knows that they are serious. They say outright that they want more help than they usually get in thinking through and straightening out their beliefs and obligations, and the principles on which to build their lives. (But by "help" they don't mean prim precepts, or being "told.")

Our rights and freedoms are deeply rooted in a religious culture. Jewish-Christian ethics are still what most Americans count on as a guide. In our age, scientific progress has been awesome. It has been, in fact, so dazzling as to almost blind us to its failure to improve human relations. Adolescents who are struggling with what to make of the world need the support their parents can give in affirming the moral and spiritual values on which our society was founded and has endured. Such support will come from the way their parents' lives demonstrate their beliefs and ideals. Whatever parents teach must be something they believe—and live.

Young adolescents cannot be said, in general, to be consciously coping with the problem of developing for themselves a "philosophy of life." But they have been acquiring one, nevertheless, around the core of their early teaching and experience. Like the growth of a pearl around a grain of sand, this acquisition is gradual. At the time we are concerned with they

are struggling to fit into the framework of their own lives those moral and ethical values that their families have been passing on to them since earliest childhood, no matter what their religion. For some, there may be a sort of religious awakening. For many others, the gropings toward meanings for life may be a less noticeable part of the slow transition from childish dependence to a resolute trust in the ideals that are forming in their minds.

Parents can give strong moral support by such means as practicing and encouraging tolerance of others' religious beliefs—that charity of mind that has always been a corner-stone of our democracy. Many studies of how racial and other biases are learned in early childhood point out how great, though often unconscious, parents' influence is in determining attitudes. In the teens, those parents who are careful to recognize their sons' and daughters' growing need to come to their own conclusions on questions of consequence, need not fear that they and their children will come to a parting of the ways. Understanding of each other will grow, rather than the other way round.

Daydreaming

The inner life of older boys and girls is a world into which parents can rarely enter. It helps, though, if they understand the desire to be alone now and then, the need for solitary dreaming that is so strong while the search for self-discovery is going on. Daydreaming is as natural to adolescence as breathing. A girl's visions of becoming a great actress may never be realized, but her life is vitalized by her dream. A boy, closing his door to study, may put in only half the evening on his books, but the half he spends in the clouds may be just as productive. Many great accomplishments have had their beginnings in those flashes by which the future is lit up for expectant boys and girls.

“The boy is a human being. He should be treated like a human being. He should be given the same respect and consideration that his elders demand for themselves. He has a will that is free, a mind that thinks, and a soul that is immortal. Any method of punishment which violates the boy's spiritual nature cannot be expected to bring about his moral improvement. Neither can it be expected to produce social refinement. It fails to meet the very needs which are more vital for character growth.”

Father Flanagan: *Understanding Your Boy*.
New York: Rinehart, 1950—pp. 120–121.

When they do let parents in on their dreams, it is important to listen with sympathy. Idealistic plans that seem far-fetched and impossible ought not to be pooh-poohed. Hopes may be of great help toward growing up satisfactorily. The adolescent will, as he matures, gradually bring his hopes into line with the capabilities that he begins to recognize in himself.

However, we would have cause for concern if young adolescents tended to withdraw to such an extent that they began to be more interested in thinking about themselves than in getting out and doing. This is a time for looking into oneself—but not for getting tangled in self-doubt and depression.

The daydream that is an escape from too-hard pressure of real life must be taken seriously. When a person of any age takes refuge in a dream because he finds his real surroundings unendurable he needs help. Parents who see a young person retreating from his problems instead of tackling them should seek to get at the reasons. If he is unable to talk his problems out with them, the counselor in the school or the child welfare worker in the community may come to the rescue. The minister or the doctor may be able to suggest sources of help, in the absence of a child guidance clinic.

***“We need to lift the security anchor from the home
and place it in the ‘peer’ group.”***

Hedley Dimock: Midcentury White House Conference, Panel 7.

Development brings new responsibilities



As school is children's big job throughout the years, here is where one of parents' main chances lies for letting them assume responsibility.

One of the things they dislike is to be nagged at about their school grades. It's easy to see why parents do it; they want to be proud of their children, want them to do their best. They realize that the habits of industry, or of slackness, that they're now forming are important to their future.

But all of our motives back of prodding about school work may not bear looking into. Are we sometimes thinking as much of our own comfort as theirs? Are we afraid they may not be a credit to us?

By the time boys and girls are in high school, we usually have a pretty fair notion as to their ability. We should also have come to a realization that it's up to them, not to us, to do something with what brains they have. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't do everything we can to encourage good work, to show interest in what they're studying, and to take an active part in movements for improvements in our school system. But the fact that teen-agers shy away from having their parents visit at school should tell us that they are ready, and expecting, to take responsibility themselves.

There will be ways of helping, perhaps, like hunting up a good story or biography dealing with the period a boy or girl is studying in history. We may even be able to put to use something we once learned. (One father joked about this: "The only reason I can see for taking algebra was so I could help my children when they took it—at least that is the only use I seem to have made of it!")

If a teen-ager's school work seems far below his capacity, it will be important to consider his study habits and to look for reasons why he's not using his abilities. If he's indifferent, what are his real interests, and how can they be tied in with his school work? Is he unhappy because he doesn't seem to fit in socially at school? Is he worried over some situation in the

family, something about which his mind could be relieved if his concern were understood? Is he in top-notch physical condition? A boy may be so taken up with sports or a girl with various outside things at school that they just can't be bothered with studying out of school hours. In this case, their programs may need careful going over. Has the school some plan that will spread the offices and honors around more? Or is this part of school life as important learning as what they get out of books?

The chronic putter-off-er, girl or boy, who leaves until late Sunday night preparing for an examination or writing a theme for Monday, will not be helped by hair-tearing or urging from his parents. Learning to put his time to better advantage is something *he* will have to do. Parents can help by seeing that rules for nights out, uninterrupted study hours, and regular hours for sleep are held to. But these rules have to be arrived at after mutual discussion and agreement.

Are parents' expectations fair?

While we're encouraging boys and girls to take on more and more responsibility for running their own affairs, there's one responsibility of our own that we mustn't forget. That is, not to expect of them in school achievement more than they're able to do. One boy may have been "better than" a number of others in the third grade, but his work at this stage or any other should be based not on what others can do but on what he himself is capable of. By the time he is in his teens he should have had a chance to build confidence, to feel good about his school life in some respect. He may not be brilliant at mathematics, but his physical coordination may be so good that he is expert at the bat, or at ski jumping. In the case of a girl, talent for telling a story well, for doing imitations of people, for painting the stage set for the school play may give enough satisfaction to make up for relatively slow reading. Girls are in general a little more conscientious about their studies, as the approval they get for marks means more to them than it does to boys.

Parents can easily be overambitious for their children and by so doing, stack the cards against them. Putting too heavy a load of responsibility on boys or girls to be "successful" is a mistake no parent should knowingly make.

The idea of success deserves thoughtful consideration, for it has many meanings. What if Annette is successful in her studies if she is so shy and tongue-tied in groups that no one at school knows how amusing she can be at home? When a girl (or boy) acts bashful about meeting people or making friends, help must be given in ways that don't call attention to the difficulty. Chances for embarrassment are few in very simple, informal groups; a wiener roast keeps everyone busy as a party may not. To spend a family vacation tenting in a State park offers a lot more chance of fun for a shaky beginner at social life than would one on a more formal basis.

The mother of 13-year-old Julie gives parties for her, buys her clothes, sees that she has a permanent—all in the belief that she is trying to make her child happy. It doesn't take very close observation to bring out the question, "Isn't she really making Julie unhappy?" Her mother hasn't

realized that by doing so much for her daughter she has made Julie's school mates envy her. They act a little cold to Julie, who has come to feel that there must be something wrong with her. • Otherwise, why would her mother be so critical of her appearance, always fussing about her hair, or wondering if this color or that will be better for a dress? Actually, Julie is perfectly capable of managing her own social life.

Adolescents should share in decision-making

There's a rather striking—and amusing—thing about these years that often doesn't strike parents as being funny at all. Adolescents begin to speak up for themselves amazingly well. And what happens? Instead of being proud of the young debater's ability to counter their arguments, parents often call it "back talk" or cheekiness. After having rather often to tell children what to do for years parents get so used to the pedestal position of "knowing better" that it's a jolt to have their teen-agers question their wisdom.

Maybe they do sound "fresh." But sometimes if parents listen they'll find that the adolescent is stating a really fresh point of view, one worth considering. Some families have found informal family councils very useful, for the purpose of giving everyone a chance to have his or her say in matters that are of concern to everyone.

Perhaps fewer arguments over very trivial things would occur if more young people had this kind of chance to thrash out questions that all too often are settled by parents without free discussion. "Who needs a new coat most this spring?" "Would it work better if we took turns at some of the jobs around the house weekly, or monthly?" "How can we work out a scheme among those who use the family car to share the expense?" These are questions that really matter to everyone, so everyone should have a vote. In rural families there is more chance for "one for all" learning. Living a more unified life makes it easier to see reasons for sharing, for giving up in the interests of the whole group, which is usually larger than the city family.

"Self-control must be acquired on the new terms of 'I do this because that's what I think is right.' It might well be that the adolescent will come very close to parental standards and values in the end but he needs the feeling that he arrived there on his own. . . . If this self-directive capacity is not developed during adolescence, the individual is likely to . . . carry within himself a permanent feeling of inadequacy."

Peter Blos: Child Study, Winter 1946-47.
The Essence of Adolescent Change—p. 45.

If we see this reaching out for more independence as something which the young adolescent *must* do, as a task which growing up sets him, we will be looking out for ways in which he may do it without anxiety. In whatever setting we live, certain opportunities present themselves. A child on a farm gets chances at certain kinds of experience, one in a city, at others. Mark can raise a calf or chickens, and be recognized for his efforts; just as Marjorie is when her pie wins a prize at the county fair. But at the same time Mark and Marjorie may be closely supervised as to the way they spend their leisure time. Because they live in a small community, their parents know where they go and with whom. A city boy or girl sometimes has greater freedom in this respect, but fewer chances to point with pride at something achieved alone, partly because of stiffer competition.

A main obligation of parents is to watch for ways in which their children can be freed enough to take on new responsibilities. Progressively, from year to year we must remind ourselves to stand over them less. When we keep nagging at a girl to keep her room neater, we may cancel her elation at having stuck to and carried out school assignments that involved real struggle and determination. Maybe the battle she won is much more important than our prissy emphasis on orderliness.

When Evelyn comes home from school very much set up over being chosen to be on a TV program, we find it hard to reconcile her buoyancy with the tiredness she reveals the minute we interrupt to ask her for help with dinner. But both are part of the truth. She feels very grown up about being chosen for the TV honor, and it's enough to make her tired to be asked to come out of the clouds, and be concerned with such mundane things as food. (Even so slight a difference in approach as to say, "Come out in the kitchen where I can hear all about it" might have eased the way to gaining her cooperation.)

Parents can encourage responsibility

What are some of the things we can do to help equip our boys and girls to take responsibility for their own actions?

1. We can encourage them to set down the pros and cons of different courses of action. Getting a line on the "fors" and "againsts" always helps in decision-making. (If I spend my allowance for three months on this, what may be coming up later that I'll regret having to go without?)
2. We can give really challenging activities at home. (A boy may respond better to having the *whole* job of washing and waxing the car than to "helping" do it. If it seems wise, his father can offer to help, but avoid supervising. It is gratifying to a girl to hear her father say she irons his shirts better than a laundry would.)
3. We can make sure that when they have earned approval or praise, they get it. A pat on the back for hard effort invites a child to throw back his shoulders and take more responsibility.
4. When we set down rules, they should be rules that our children shared in making. Our teen-agers are fully capable of thinking through such problems as hours for coming home at night, sharing

the use of the family car, and other questions. If rules are made only to bring peace of mind to ourselves, there is little incentive to live up to them. ("And my mother said, when Donald brought me home, 'No, Donald, you can't come in now. It's 10:30.' It's the way she said it that humiliated me!")

5. We can give our children valuable experience in working out problems by discussing them in the family group.

All their lives they will be called on to act with others in trying to solve problems. Fewer people, relatively, take part in community affairs than used to be the case when they lived in smaller groups. When town-meetings were the rule, everyone had a voice in decisions that affected him. Nowadays, many people feel helpless to *do* anything about city, or state, or national conditions. Groups small enough to give people a feeling that they count in the scheme of things are important.

The family is a child's first learning-group, and parents have a fine opportunity during adolescence, that shouldn't go to waste, of giving youngsters lots of practice in cooperative thinking and group decision-making, which can be translated into their own group action.

Learning to use money

Adolescents vary so much in their opportunities for learning to use money, and family practices (not to speak of incomes) are so different, that any flat statements are impossible about how that learning goes on. According to what little evidence we have, those whose parents are giving some constructive help, do improve children's ability to handle their money capably. Boys, it seems, are more often than girls given this kind of help by parents. But as women handle a large share of the family money, girls need education along this line, too.

But education in the use of money isn't all that's involved! How adolescents (and adults, too) spend their money is closely related to their personalities. Attitudes toward money are built up partly on the basis of emotional needs. When a boy or girl spends excessively or unwisely, hoards, or shows any other striking attitude toward money, parents might want to con-

"The more the adolescent feels that his maturity is underrated, the more rebellious he will be, and the more awkward will be his attempts to prove how grown-up he is. . . . He needs further opportunities to be independent when his experience has let him down, and not ridicule or restraint. The adolescent can become independent only by trying to be."

J. Roswell Gallagher, M. D.: *Understanding Your Son's Adolescence*. Boston: Little, Brown. 1951—p. 161.

sider underlying causes. Why is it that one boy needs to impress his friends by picking up the check for a double-date stop for hot dogs? Why does he feel the need of this kind of recognition by his peers? Why does a certain girl cautiously cling to her money as though it were a life preserver? What other way can be found of giving her the security she seems to find in being miserly?

The giving of an allowance, however, is one practical way of helping young people form sensible habits. When the allowance is added to from time to time in proportion to growing needs, the practice a boy or girl gets over the years is considerable.

If, on the other hand, money is doled out to a teen-ager as he asks for it, he builds up no picture of where and how far what he gets must go. Those who don't have an allowance report that they believe they get more out of their parents to spend that way, so regular weekly or monthly sums aren't actually as hard on the family pocketbook as they appear.

Parents who say they cannot afford to give allowances are not being realistic. Most parents spend money on their children. The allowance, small or large, is only a device which gives boys and girls themselves a chance to do the spending, starting with little things and going on to bigger ones as they develop judgment. And if the allowance has to be cut, or even skipped at times when family finances are low, a valuable kind of learning goes on then, too.

Beginning with items like carfare, lunches, school supplies and donations, haircuts and shoe resoling, a trial run of some months will tell what the necessities are at a given age.

Parents should not expect a report of that part of the allowance that is to be spent as its owner pleases. Jean should not have to report that she's walked to school for a month, in order to save for some cosmetics she's been hankering for. But as for regular necessary expenses, only a record regularly kept can give any clear idea of changing or future needs.

Teen-agers who have been gradually increasing their responsibility for spending throughout their early years will be ready to buy some important items of their own clothing. This presupposes their having had some practice in learning to make choices. In Martha's case, her mother has been the one who said of one coat, "That is out of our price range," but Martha has had a chance to decide on the color and cut she prefers, and she has had a lesson about fabrics, from hearing her mother ask the clerk questions. She has paused, at her mother's suggestion, to think over whether the color she "loves" will harmonize with the dresses she'll wear it with.

The practical value of learning to plan ahead, and save for items like a coat or suit, that are not bought every year, and that involve a large outlay, is great. For the young person who lacks this experience often has a frightening time juggling his budget to fit his money to his needs, when he or she leaves home to take a job or go away to school.

Boys and girls who have chances to earn money get practice in saving for things their allowance didn't cover. And those who have been in on family discussions of finances are ahead of adolescents whose parents haven't made a practice of talking over such things with them. They have

gained a perspective that could hardly come in any other way. When a boy knows how much insurance his father has to pay each year on the car, when he and his father sit down together and figure—even roughly—the actual cost of using the family car for an evening, that boy is less likely to drive carelessly.

Talking things over

When family finances are too complicated for easy handling in group discussions, talking over some of the many things that have to be considered can still be done. Parents can point out that some of what comes in must be set aside to provide for such things as education and life insurance, and that a reserve is needed for expenses like shingling the roof, or a hospital bill. "After we take care of that, in addition to food and heat and taxes, we have about this much left for family living. We can all talk over together how we can best use it."

Family councils need not be formal affairs, at set times. This might make them seem too cut and dried an approach to problems that are a matter of human relations. In many a home, the kitchen is the place where problems are aired and threshed out. Each family is so individual in its interplay of relationships, in its standards and values, that it must settle for itself the question as to how to bring about free-flowing exchange of information as to the needs of each member, in relation to the needs of the family as a whole.

One valuable thing about such family discussions should not be overlooked: the chance it gives children to know their father, and his problems, better. In general, boys and girls in the United States have all too few chances to get close to their fathers' affairs. Now that so large a proportion of our families live in cities, many children never even see where their father works, and often have only rather vague notions as to what he does. The situation is quite different from the time when many more children grew up on farms, were intimately aware of how family income was affected by the weather, for example, and had a hand in most of the farm activities. Today, what with chain stores and mass production, fewer children grow up in intimate association with their father's working life.

"It is in this sense that responsibility is liberty; the more decisions that you are forced to make alone, the more you are aware of your freedom to choose. I hold that we cannot be said to be aware of our minds save under responsibility."

Thornton Wilder: *The Ides of March*.
New York: Harper, 1948—p. 34.

Earning Money

Boys and girls who live in the country may have fewer different ways of earning money than city children have, but the ways they earn it may be as much, if not more, satisfactory in giving them pride and prestige—the exhilaration, for instance, that comes to a boy or girl who raises a sheep or steer to be shown at a county fair, and makes a profit when it is sold.

Opportunities for many urban teen-agers to earn money are equalled only by their ingenuity in inventing ways. Part-time or summer work is an important learning experience, but parents need to see that the programs their children embark on are not so ambitious as to endanger their health.

In cases where family need is so great that a youth's earnings must supplement the family income, his pride in being able to help is in itself a reward. But whenever possible, boys' and girls' earnings should be their own to save or to use for their clothes or school needs. We know how eager teen-agers are to feel independent, yet parents are sometimes tempted to dictate how earnings shall be spent. More helpfully, they can develop ideas of saving by such means as encouraging the opening of savings accounts, or perhaps putting something into a fund all the family are contributing to in order to save for a special purpose. Since many young people marry very soon after they finish high school, it is highly desirable that they make some money mistakes now—for they are going to make some—which may head off a number later, when more is at stake. A 16-year-old who spends most of his precious earnings on a fourth-hand car, only to find that insurance costs more than he thought it would, and that parts and gas cost money, too, learns a lesson out of his experience.

Wholesome attitudes toward work

Abraham Lincoln said his father taught him to work, but not to love to work. Looking back, we can see that the lack of good feeling between Thomas Lincoln and his son may, in part, have grown out of their very different feelings about what work was important. The boy's absorption in reading didn't seem to his father to serve any useful purpose. But it was no doubt hard for the boy who had spent his day in the fields to stay awake nights to read the books he had walked miles to borrow. This, though, was work that brought him inner satisfaction. It was work for which he could see a reason greater than for clearing the fields from which he surmised his father would probably soon move restlessly on west. And it was effort for which in the end he received recognition.

People have always liked to work. Joy in accomplishment is deeply rooted in human nature. So when we see shirking or grumbling over work it may be a good idea to ask ourselves whether any of those three rewards which urged Lincoln on—inner satisfaction in striving toward a goal, a good reason for the work, and recognition for effort—is tied up with the task.

So eager are children for accomplishment that it's impossible, with them, to draw a line between work and play. A 16-year-old girl slaves over making a dress and her brother spends endless hours getting an old motor-

cycle to run. This is work, but of their own choosing. It has not been forced on them. If we can carry over children's joy in strenuous effort from things that they do voluntarily (in play) into things that have to be done (defined as work), we will be doing them a service. For while it is likely that few of them will escape a good deal of monotony and drudgery in adult life, the more kinds of work they can learn to enjoy, the better their chances of looking cheerfully on even dull routine tasks.

How can we keep freely flowing the natural industriousness and joy in work that we know is inherent in children? Isn't it largely a matter of using imagination? Of looking at things through our children's eyes?

The tasks we set are so often those that suit our convenience, with little regard for boys' and girls' abilities. "Carrying out the garbage" is very commonly reported by parents as something they ask their children to do. But what possible satisfaction can anyone beyond the age of 3 or 4 find in such a duty? To wash and dry dishes is another task invariably asked of children. It may be one that has to be done 1,095 times a year. But how many parents put thought into how to make it anything but boring? (Some families who have given it thought, by the way, turn out housewives who don't detest the very word "dishes." The fun those families shared in singing together over the dish-pan, or learning funny verses tacked up over the sink, took the drudgery out, so that their attitude in adult life is one at least of acceptance.)

Monotonous tasks seem more purposeful if seen in their relation to their over-all purpose. Almost every job has its dull routine, which is acceptable in proportion to our interest in the main objective. Washing dishes is not just washing dishes; it is making our homes the kind of places we can be proud of and enjoy bringing our friends into.

Making use of abilities

The attitudes of parents themselves toward work are probably more powerful than any planned attempt at helping children be responsible about it. Complaining, grumbling, sighing over work that's always waiting to be done are as easily copied by children as cheerful acceptance and always-fresh interest in taking on the challenge of hard or even routine and monotonous jobs.

To consider whether we are making use of children's abilities is one of the first steps in making work enjoyable. Who cares about work that just anyone can do? "Why am I asked to do this job?" may very well be a child's unspoken response to tasks set him. "Is it because no one else wants it, or because they think I can do it especially well?" Not just according to age, but to talents, as well. Maybe Peter, who has a sharp eye for a bargain, would do a better job at shopping for the family groceries than at cleaning the basement.

Teen-agers could probably carry more responsibility than parents give them, but we say that it's hard to find responsibilities, in modern living. But how about Mary, who has shown such good sense about handling her allowance? Why not capitalize on her interest by letting her handle some of the family bills—electricity, gas, telephone, to start with; maybe insurance,

rent, or grocery bills as time goes on? Making use of interest and inclinations pays off decidedly in the promotion of the industry and perseverance that we know will always be a help to young people, whatever kind of work they may do later.

Arthur, whose early liking for using tools was noticed and encouraged, may not turn out to be a plumber or a carpenter. But if he has been provided with equipment, and help in learning how to use it, he may get (even out of fixing faucets, the electric iron or the vacuum cleaner, glueing a chair, or making a shoe rack) a sense of personal worth, of competence that makes all the difference in how he tackles and sticks to other work.

Can we point to a good reason for the requested task? Especially among older children, seeing its usefulness will have a lot to do with attitudes toward work. Perhaps, in the days when the family carried on most of the activities necessary to its subsistence, it was easier to connect duties and needs. Maybe children who had to tend sheep never complained over the long hours they put in with the silly creatures, though it's safe to suspect they occasionally did. But the fact that they saw the wool off the sheep going into their clothes made the task their parents set them seem reasonable, to say the least. To have as a motto, "Can we, together, arrive at a good reason why Jim or Jane should do this particular job?" might result in much more cooperative behavior, and a better job done.

But surely teen-agers should be self-starters, not needing kid-glove handling or cajoling into "having a good time" at work? They certainly *are* self-starters—at anything they are interested in! Why not at least try to engage their interest in skills that we believe it necessary for them to learn? Otherwise, we're going against the grain, instead of with it. There's more interest in having sole charge of making one dish than in helping to get a meal.

And let's remember, adolescents' school work is their main job. Less should be expected of them at home, the more outside responsibilities they have. They often come through magnificently when emergencies arise in the family.

"It is in work outside the home that a young person begins to see his own identity emerge. He is no longer a mere member of a family; in fact his employer and fellow employees may not know a thing about his family. He stands and falls by his own ability and by his own accomplishments. He is paid quite impersonally, on a purely commercial basis."

Douglas A. Thom, M. D., Guiding the Adolescent.
Children's Bureau, 1933. (Out of print.)

A sense of industry is heightened by the recognition a boy or girl gets. Whether in the form of money, or praise for effort, or being given added and coveted responsibility as a result isn't the point. For mother to take pains to read and comment on the good features of Kay's history or English paper; for Jim to be allowed to drive on a slippery night because he has used such care and good judgment on other occasions; for Bill to be complimented on how reliable he has been about getting up early to deliver the morning papers—these are a few of the ways in which an adolescent's belief in himself is strengthened, and his satisfaction in work deepened.

Adolescents need recognition

In other parts of this discussion the adolescent's need of feeling important, useful, and wanted has been mentioned. In this stretch of years, which is such a "between" time, this must be said over and over. To feel grown up in many ways, but not to be looked on as having much of a contribution to make to society; to feel wings of idealistic ambition sprouting, but to have nobody else appear to see them, puts the adolescent in a place where he welcomes any evidence that he is appreciated. A mother who must work outside her home has a special opportunity in this respect. Whether or not girls and boys do their obviously necessary tasks to perfection, the self-respect they feel when their mother shows her pleasure over their taking responsibility starts them on the way to taking more.

Praise, for real plugging at hard school work, for getting jobs outside, for help in emergencies at home, is an important vitamin. Parents needn't worry much about supplying overdoses. There's probably more danger in forgetting to give it than there is of handing it out when it's not merited.

Abraham Lincoln's father may have thought he was lazy, but his step-mother said she never had to give him a word of reproof. "Our minds seemed to run more in the same channels," she said after his death. It seems more than likely that the channel her mind took was one that sometimes flowed with appreciation of her tall stepson, who was as hard a worker with his mind as he was with his muscles.

When a teen-ager cannot apply himself to work with steady purposefulness, it's high time to look for the reasons. There's a misunderstanding somewhere. Is his school work too hard, not stimulating enough? Are his jobs at home too picayune or far-fetched to command his interests? Are his relations with his parents so unhappy that he tries to shrug off responsibility, and remain a child? "Laziness" or indifference is a symptom, and, as in disease, it's most unsafe to treat symptoms, rather than the cause of the trouble. An adolescent who "forgets," over and over, to do what he's supposed to, or who rarely finishes a job without prodding, is likely to be one whose mind is so taken up with his own worries or fears that other things are pushed aside. How to lift the pressure off, so that he can be free to put his energies to better purpose is a question that may require careful study of the boy or girl involved.

Friends and companions



As boys and girls pass into the teen-age period their friendships tend to take on a more personal meaning than before. These relationships become meaningful not just because of the importance of acceptance by their peers, but also because of the longing to share new feelings and experiences. A friend may be valued highly for his or her ability to give affection, even though the status of this friend may not be high in a group of associates. With adolescent changes, and the deepening of interests, children begin to look for different things in their friends than when they were content with (or at least would put up with) the companionship of almost anyone who liked vigorous games and other typical pursuits of the 6 to 12er.

Occasionally there's loneliness and dislocation because of uneven growth at this time. Cathy, for example, is going through a hard stage. Her close associates have leaped ahead of her into adolescence, while she is still a "little girl." Their absorption in boys seems to her silly. She's impatient at the other girls' hopeful talk about dates, and they, on the other hand, find her "childish." So she gets to feeling left out. When she herself matures, she may find that she's drawn to different girls than those with whom she played before, girls whose reading interests, activities, and dreams match hers more closely.

A girl (or boy) who forges ahead of or lags behind her chums may need special encouragement to get through this no-man's land, some assurance that she will not continue to be a misfit. If Cathy's mother, for example, is alert to her daughter's loneliness, she may be able to tide over a hard period by planning for Cathy to have a few weeks at camp, where new acquaintances will distract her.

There are many ways of getting around differences in the timing of growth changes. Having a place where other boys can come to work on their hobbies—a corner partitioned off in the basement for developing films, odds and ends of materials to tinker with, a badminton net in the back yard—may mean that a boy is never at a loss for companionship, even though he may at some point, like Cathy, be developing at a different rate than his friends. A father who is so sensitive to his boy's needs as to provide space and tools to work with will find that other boys make his home a center.

Of course a great many boys and girls never get out of step with their age group, and move smoothly from one stage to another with no interruptions.

Being with friends will involve a lot more absence from home than when children were younger. Girls do more visiting at other girls' homes than do boys, who are more likely to roam. The companions of one's choice live farther away, or are likely to be found staying after school for band or baseball practice, or some extra-curricular club work. Or, an adolescent's friends, like himself, may be onlookers at sports, for watching rather than taking part becomes more and more common as adolescence advances. This suggests how desirable it is that children have opportunities for learning various skills like swimming, skating, dancing and games while they are still young enough not be embarrassed at being dubs at them. Once they get to the time when "smoothness" is important to their social life, they may hesitate to become gawky beginners.

Older children who are drawn together are likely to be fairly similar in mental ability. An adolescent's friends are more often than not from about the same social and economic level as he is, too; the type of home and clothes a boy or girl has, and the amount of spending money, help to determine whom he or she will go around with. Where they live makes a difference, too; rural teen-agers need their parents' help in making it possible for them to see their friends often. On farms, thousands of boys who must spend a lot of time alone, at plow or cultivator, miss the chance for easy socialization that the city boy takes for granted. Such boys may find it hard to get used to life in the Armed Services, or even to city life.

Friends are understanding

Something parents have to get used to is the fact that older children tend more and more to confide their problems and concerns in their friends. In the "bull sessions" of boys, favorite topics are sports and girls; overnight visits and endless telephone conversations of girls concern boys and social life and clothes to a great extent. Such things may seem trivial to parents, but they represent major interests that can be talked over much more freely with age-mates than with parents. Girls even more than boys tend as they get older to take intimate concerns to their friends, boys seeming not to need this personal intimacy in their friendships to quite the same degree.

If an adolescent is to feel confident among his friends he needs to have his judgments about them bolstered up. Without thinking, parents sometimes criticize their children's companions in a way that hurts. Unless there is a question of morals involved, we are in a pretty shaky position if we try to decide on the desirability of this or that companion. A boy who seems colorless to us may show to his friends a side we don't see at all. What Joan's parents label as "silly" behavior in a friend of hers may be just what Joan hungers for, to offset the soberly matter-of-fact attitudes of her family, who seldom go into gales of laughter.

Adolescents are very frank to criticize each other, but they prefer to point out to their friends their shortcomings or oddities rather than to have their families do it.

Popularity among peers

What determines boys' and girls' popularity and acceptance among their mates? Different things are important at different ages. Throughout, the boy who is strong, brave, and even daring, is admired by other boys, and hero-worship of girls for the football captain and the winner of the high-jump, whether they're handsome or homely, is evidence that girls feel the same way. The role that the boy is expected to play in life—that of the self-reliant, more aggressive person than the girl is expected to be—makes the gaining of physical powers during the earlier years important to his occupying a good position among his mates. But boys' and girls' prestige may go up or down considerably from one period to another, depending on whether they fit in with the changing expectations of their age-mates. The boy whose standing has been high because of his fine physical abilities will be more popular in his mid-teens if he gives his personal appearance some attention, and if his table manners show some traces of polish.

While girls nowadays enter into sports and games, and disdain the prim behavior that used to be expected of them, relatively few of them become channel swimmers or tennis champions. Their acceptance by their own or the opposite sex in no wise depends on the mastery of physical feats. Neatness, friendliness, and good looks encourage a girl's having some prestige while she's in her younger teens. But a little later, after she has established herself, she may acceptably show a little more lively behavior and be less of a conformer. The cover-girl type, so sure of being attractive to boys, isn't necessarily popular with girls.

The cleavage between the "haves" and "have nots" begins to be noticeable in the teens. Some young people manage to cling to the looked-up-to groups longer than others, and boys tend to be democratic in their social selection longer than girls. The gap between those who have few advantages and those who have many, or whose parents have high prestige

"That the adolescent takes up with his peers his personal problems—whether of superficialities of appearance and conduct or some of deeper importance to him—suggests that among his friends he feels a responsibility for his own adjustment, of attempting to meet demands and expectations of others, of changing if necessary."

Caroline B. Zachry: *Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence*.
New York: Appleton-Century, 1940—p. 355.

in the community, becomes wider with the years. The pressures that come from the expense of "keeping up" have a good deal to do with the way the cake of the adolescent is cut. Some of them begin to get pretty slim pieces, no matter how much they were accepted earlier, or how likable and admirable they are. "Poor boy makes good" much later, perhaps, but unfortunately in his teens he may have to look in from outside at material pleasures and ways of life he has set his heart on achieving.

Adolescents whose circumstances hasten them into showing their mettle early sometimes find a new and satisfying status. Terry, the eldest of 8 children, first got a paper route, graduated to being bus boy in a drug store during rush hours and on Saturdays when he was 15, and by the time he finished high school had so pleased his employer that he was put in charge of the soda fountain. But such teen-agers, boy or girl, must lose out on much of the social life of their age group, due to lack of leisure time. No one would want all adolescents, no matter how great the benefits of having jobs and feeling useful, to have such a demanding schedule as Terry's.

What Crushes Tell Us

What about crushes, those sudden, mad attachments that seem so characteristic of adolescence? They are so common among girls that they must fill some natural and quite normal need, surely. The devotion sometimes shown to a teacher, as transient as it is passionate, illustrates the need adolescents have for embodying an ideal. To search for someone who seems to be all that one would like to become typifies youth's reaching out toward the future. Finding someone to admire and to copy, whether among heroines in books, among actresses, or in real life, is part of the search toward finding oneself.

Once in a while a crush tells us more than this about a girl. Looked at closely, an exaggerated attachment sometimes reveals that a girl is being starved for love. Perhaps she has a mother who has not known how to interpret her daughter's changing needs. Or perhaps her mother has never understood her the way she did a brother or sister. A crush can easily be taken very seriously when a girl has no mother. Or, a girl who is very much in need of admiration or affection can be flattered by another's kindness into believing it means more than it does.

Occasionally a girl seems to pick out another girl to receive her devotion because she is afraid of being unattractive to boys. Her outpouring of love for someone of her own sex may be an unconscious effort to deny her growing interest in boys. Still another possibility is that a girl who doesn't seem to be outgrowing the normal crushes we expect in the teens may be seeking to make up for something that is lacking in her. Thus an intensely feminine girl may pick out one who has more so-called masculine traits than she has, or the other way round. To seek these differences in persons of her own sex may mean that she needs help in learning how to make friends with the opposite sex.

Among girls whose parents are not keeping them dependent, at a level of emotional immaturity, and who have had plenty of chances for natural

expression of affection, the crush stage is just another phase to be passed through, much as they earlier went through one of devotion to "series" stories.

For boys or girls to limit their friends to their own sex, once the teen age is entered, is to hold back from accomplishing one of the main developments due in that age: gradual transference of interest to the opposite sex.

Girls more often than boys confide in a diary. The diary may, in some cases, take the place of a real person with whom to share secrets, but keeping one is common even among girls who are not withdrawn and lacking in friends. Sometimes boys and girls who keep diaries resort to code, in putting down their most private thoughts and feelings, thus showing their great misgiving about the danger to their pride, should anyone chance to read their outpourings. It need hardly be said that parents should carefully observe adolescents' desire for privacy about letters and diaries.

Depending too much on a single friend applies more often to girls than to boys. When such a relation is so satisfying that it shuts others out, it can be more dangerous than rewarding. Intimacies like this can easily result in one being more dependent than the other. To get to be a clinging vine is not very healthy. And it can lead to a decided hurt, for the stronger individual is likely to tire of being leaned on, and turn for enjoyment to someone sturdier and more independent. Jean may be so wrapped up in Mary that she doesn't feel the lack of other friends. But what if Mary moves away? Mothers and teachers, who see something like this happening, can help by stimulating broader interests. The wider the interests, the more the new contacts.

Once in a while a boy or girl is in the unfortunate position of having to buy friendship. One such case is that of Kenneth. He has never done well at school, and his failure to move along with his group has meant that boys are constantly leaving him behind. At no time has he really been a part of any group. His way of getting around this is to try to be "a good sport." Most of his allowance has for years gone into buying things for other boys, candy or marbles when he was little, the offer of his bat or baseball glove in order to get into the game when he was a little older.

Where is leisure time spent?

When parents have a lively, cordial interest in how leisure time is spent there is little likelihood that their sons or daughters will be reduced to roaming at loose ends, and falling in with others whose families are indifferent to what they are doing. The background of the adolescent who gets into trouble all too often turns out to be one in which parents are so absorbed in their own affairs or so overcome by the pressures of living that they are neglectful (sometimes through ignorance) of their children's needs. This can happen in any kind of neighborhood. The depredations of gangs of youngsters who steal gas, borrow cars for joy-rides, or damage property on Halloween are by no means confined to slum districts. When they turn up in highly respectable parts of a city, investigation as often as not discloses a situation in which the parents have let slide their responsibility to know where their children are, and what they are doing.

Keeping posted on what there is for youngsters to do, to keep them busy, doesn't mean suspicious checking up on where they are every minute, or being so fearful that they have no freedom. It means, rather, caring—really caring—about whether they have enjoyable and safe ways of spending leisure time. Parents who make a habit of being at home evenings, of being concerned about the hours and company their children keep, and of making home a pleasant place by means of games and records and a place to use them will be free of a good deal of worry. But young teen-agers, left to their own devices, may try out their freedom in dare-devil escapades. Tales sometimes circulate about damage done at a party where cokes are squirted around the room and cigarettes left to burn the furniture. But isn't it common for each parent whose child was present to be tempted to think that the blame must rest on the shoulders of other parents than himself?

Parties planned by or for teen-agers should be chaperoned by responsible persons. Young people often prefer to ask a couple only slightly older than themselves to act in this capacity, with the idea that they may be inclined to be less vigilant than older persons. This feeling of adolescents that they are too closely watched by parent chaperones is lessened when two or three sets of parents take on responsibility, and have each other to hobnob with.

When teen-agers are at loose ends

Aimless, unsupervised, unplanned activities can easily degenerate into unwholesome ones. Boys or girls in a group will do things no one of them alone would have the courage to do. It's rarely one boy alone who begins tossing stones at street lights or schoolhouse windows. Alone, there would be little excitement about it, for one thing. Being one of a group or gang makes each one a little more bold and daring. Now each can show the others how impressively free of fear he is. Each tempts the others to take greater risks. But liking to get together is one of the most normal and natural of teen-age desires!

We would be hard put to it to imagine a community that refused to provide schools for children's intellectual needs. Is it any less shocking for communities to be blind to youth's need for social life, for which neither the school nor the home is equipped to be entirely responsible? We cannot blink the fact that it is the public responsibility of the community in which adolescents live to provide them with resources that make constructive activities possible. Voluntary organizations can often do much to awaken the conscience of the community to the need for concerted action.

When communities lack such programs it is often ignorance of youth's needs, rather than downright indifference, that stands in the way of their provision. An interesting example of this is an effort made in one locality some years ago to improve the opportunities for wholesome living. Working directly with the young people, at first, the sponsors found they could not develop a program until the plan was explained to adults. "Parents wanted to know what we were doing with their children. . . . All the resources which the program needed for action—the newspapers, school buildings, school staff, vacant houses, city property, employment service,

libraries, and churches—were under the control of adults. . . . So we revised our approach, and, by the time we had completed our assignment, we had devoted more than half our time to educating adults about youth.” *

Individual parents, even though they may feel sure their own children are well provided for, cannot shrug off this larger obligation. Only by taking an active role can they be sure that the communities in which they live will keep working at the job of making available safe and wholesome outlets for the energies of *all* their youth. There are countless ways in which they can move toward this end—through service and civic clubs, churches, youth organizations, and the P. T. A., among others. While some youth run far more risks than others of coming under undesirable influences, *every* boy and girl in a community benefits, if only indirectly, from planning that recognizes that all adolescents have the same needs and the same hungers.

It is no easy matter for parents to walk the chalk-line between too much and too little supervision and control during the early and mid-teens. But it is comforting to know that adolescents, even if they do fuss over the controls put upon them, actually, deep down, welcome the knowledge that their parents care enough to set limits. When parents make rules that are too strict, showing their fear that their children are unable to behave responsibly, this lack of belief tends to make the children rebellious. “See that you’re in by 11 o’clock” calls forth obstinate feelings that a question like, “What time will the game be over?” gets around.

The adolescent’s experimentation with smoking, for example, is one part rebellion against parents’ restrictions, and one part desire to prove to his mates that he knows how to act like a grown-up. The sterner the prohibition, the more likely the boy or girl is to try to prove to himself that he dares defy his parents. If we forbade 15-year-olds to take baths, they’d find the same excitement in taking them in secret as they do in smoking.

Family values count

It is just as true here as in other phases of family life that it is the *feeling* back of the rules that counts. If there is emotional warmth in the home, a warmth that is evidence of deep, understanding love; if the attitude of the parents has always been that of trust, of confidence that the children, as self-respecting human beings, will live up to their own estimates of themselves, there’s not going to be much room for resentment in adolescents’ lives. For they will have learned that their parents’ expectations are reasonable.

Who are the children who become rovers of the streets, who have to seek associates in a catch-as-catch-can way? We get some clues from troubled boys and girls who confide in people who are working with them. Some of them say of their parents, as one 12-year-old girl in a large family put it, “They like children when they’re little, but when they get big they don’t

*Howard Y. McClusky, *How community agencies may help with problems of delinquency in “Juvenile Delinquency and the Schools,” 47th Yearbook, National Society for the Study of Education, Part I. University of Chicago Press, 1948. (p. 196).*

like them too much." Or they may be like the 15-year-old boy who said, "I get a crack across the face when I speak up for myself." On the other hand, we can be pretty sure that a 14-year-old who says of his parents, "They're never too busy to talk with me" doesn't have to roam the streets to find someone to share his interests.

We sometimes overlook the fact that by the time children are passing through the teens, each one tends, more and more, to select out of almost any environment he chances to be in, things that are meaningful to him. What he sees, and takes out of that environment, depends a lot on what his upbringing has been. Although he often seems to be questioning family values and ideals sharply, they have influenced his feelings, and his questioning attitude gives proof that he is thinking. To be sure, he's bent on experimenting. He's curious about the haunts of bebop or jive (or whatever the current term is), just as an older generation, now settling into armchairs, was about jazz or the Charleston.

The ideals of fair play learned from parents begin to make a teen-ager observant of those companions who do, or do not, abide by the rules. The honorable attitudes his family has had about property rights will be influencing him, for example, in the scrupulous care with which he returns borrowed money. If he isn't ashamed to bring friends home, he is less likely to fall into the unhappy situation of becoming friendless or of picking up others who are at loose ends. And his home doesn't mean to him fine furniture and perfect order that must never be disturbed, but a place where he feels comfortable in his surroundings and with his family, a place to which he is glad to bring his friends.

Life in the United States today makes it peculiarly desirable for children to establish friendships easily. Because we move about so much, friendships get broken, except as they can be carried on by letter and by rare meetings. Painful as the wrench of leaving cherished friends may be, the person is fortunate who has the warmth and outgoing interest that make it possible for him to set up comfortable new relationships wherever he goes.

" . . . the adolescent child needs restrictions and limitations imposed by his family. His controls are not well established, and in attempting to find out just what they should be, he gets some strength from knowing that the limitations imposed by his parents and by society will protect him."

Milton E. Kirkpatrick, M. D.: *The Mental Hygiene of Adolescence in the Anglo-American Culture.*

Mental Hygiene 36: 394-403—p. 396.

Cliques and secret societies

Their tendency to form into small groups or cliques is one of the noticeable things about teen-agers. Earlier, two or three friends might chum together, but now, to be one of a special set becomes important. Among girls, who are more concerned than boys with the details of social life, about manners and clothes, this is observable somewhat more than in boys. Whether an adolescent gets into the set he aspires to is dictated by a good many things other than his desire.

Cliques are apt to be small, composed of a dozen or fewer favored individuals. They are likely to form with a good deal of reference to the social and economic position of their members. To dress according to the group standards, to do the things that the others do means that level of living must be fairly similar among the members. To be popular enough to be included gives a certain distinction that is not attached to groups formed around some interest or activity. Being a member of the photography club, the band, or the Spanish club, that "anyone" can get into, is less rewarding than to be singled out as highly acceptable socially.

That there is snobbishness involved hardly needs to be pointed out. But the need to be safely inside protecting walls of some sort is so common at all ages that we can understand why the adolescent, who is taking hesitant steps toward maturity, needs this security. Adults betray almost as much dependence on the backing of their own special, like-minded groups as teen-agers do. By means of clubs, lodges, church organizations and informal groups of friends people in general seek the coziness and comfort of being accepted by others with whom they have something in common. Not to belong to some intimate group makes people feel lonely and defenseless.

Younger children have the home to back them up. But the teen-ager, though not quite ready yet for complete independence, is impatient of the kind of support his family gives. He needs to have a shield and buckler in the form of intimates who approve of him, who are solidly behind him. His hopes are centered on success among his mates.

The heartaches among adolescents who long to be accepted among those peers they admire and imitate, but who are unable to break in, are touching. (To be a newcomer to a town or a school is particularly hard.) There are cliques of varying degrees of prestige, but to be accepted in a second or third best set, or to continue to stand on the outside, looking in, can have some long-lasting effects on a young person's estimate of himself, and on the growth of timidity and insecurity. Much will depend upon his parents' attitudes; a boy or girl who has been brought up in an atmosphere free of snobbery will pay very little heed to the social status of friends. Such teen-agers are sometimes strong and free enough so that they don't even *want* to join exclusive groups.

The secret society is a clique that has become crystalized and self-perpetuating. Membership in a high school fraternity or sorority indicates to schoolmates that a boy or girl has enough prestige—of a sort—to be chosen to represent the aims and ideals of the organization. That these aims are often superficial, and that the popularity of the chosen individuals

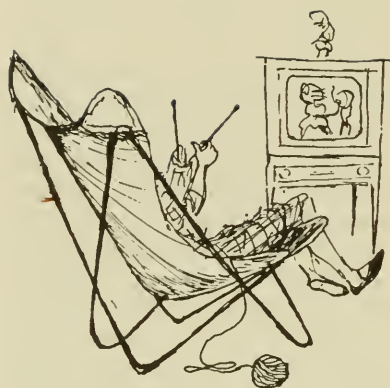
may be short-lived, isn't apparent to the teen-ager, so intent on feeling safe and secure in the school world.

Secret societies are a headache to school administrators. If they are forbidden, as undemocratic, and members penalized by being denied school honors, they often go underground. A much more constructive way of handling this universal need of adolescents to get recognition among their fellows is also a much harder one. It is, to make the activities program of the school so satisfying and varied that youngsters can get distinction and group solidarity in other ways. When there are enough interesting groups to go around, and they are small enough so that to become a member is a coveted privilege, the halo that surrounds the secret society dims a little.

Some would shrug off the secret society, saying, "There always have been and always will be different social levels; children will have to get used to the ways of the world, to being excluded from some of the groups they'd like to belong to." Have they forgotten that the high school is serving children at a time when one of their main concerns is to achieve status, and that one of the objectives of our educational system is to keep practicing the democratic ideals we stand for? School should be a place in which each student has every possible chance of establishing an honorable standing for himself, not a place that winks at practices promoting exclusive, caste-bound attitudes.

What happens when an adolescent feels cut off from the support and comfort of his age-mates? The time is then ripe for him to take out his frustration in behavior that sets him still farther back from his goal—which is to "be somebody" in his own right. He may join with others who also feel rejected and thwarted, and find in delinquent acts an outlet for his troubled emotions. Or, he may cynically retire within himself, crushed, or pretending that he doesn't care.

Severe deprivation of what seem to be the rights of adolescence can take the form of stiff rebellion, or of retreat. To seek either refuge means that the growing up process is sidetracked. In our way of living, that puts off for so long the time when young people are accepted into adult society, it seems extra important to recognize and make use of the adolescent's need for acceptance by others who are going through the same things he is.



What roles are boys and girls expected to play

Almost from the beginning, boys and girls are treated differently. Our expectations of how they should look and act and feel begin to work on them in babyhood. If a boy has curly hair, and his sister's is straight, the fact that it wasn't the other way round is bemoaned, for it has been handed down to us that a girl is supposed to be "pretty," a boy rugged in appearance. Even by the age of two, different kinds of toys are being given to boys and girls, although their play interests are still much alike.

So, by the time youngsters reach their teens, there has been a long piling up of differences in treatment and expectations. The girl is more protected; she doesn't have as much freedom as a boy, must stay closer to home. Her parents' watchfulness may have had a hand in encouraging her in timidity; at least many more teen-age girls than boys report being afraid to stay alone at night, being fearful of being followed on the street, or of such things as snakes, or earthquakes. As boys get older their fears subside more than girls' do, or so they report. Doubtless the fact that they are expected to be bold and fearless tends to make them conceal "unmanly" fears, if they do have them.

There is little or no frowning nowadays on what used to be called tomboy behavior in girls. The acceptance of blue-jeans, scuffed shoes, and hatlessness in girls illustrates this. Girls hike, play basketball, bowl—in fact enter into almost every sport boys do. But their less passionate devotion suggests real inborn differences (resting perhaps on a physical basis) and that some of the expectations as to what is "proper" behavior for boys and girls grew up as a result. However, an individual girl may be more keenly interested in some one sport than half a dozen boys put together. Adolescents are individuals, not paper dolls cut to a pattern.

Little girls are seldom asked "What are you going to be when you grow up?" a question boys have thrown at them early and often. Perhaps this lack of emphasis on their future makes for less self-scrutiny of their abilities by girls, and has something to do with their less varied and ambitious planning. Whether or not her natural inclinations lie that way, it is still customary to suppose that a girl will have an interest in housewifely activities.

A girl takes the same social studies, science and math that a boy does in high school and then is asked to shift and devote herself to homemaking, a

career little honored in the popular mind. Too few girls take in high school many courses designed to head them toward this job. Very many fewer boys have even a taste of studies planned to help them become good husbands and fathers. So we have a confused picture: the girl frustrated because there is not much prestige attached to running a home competently (as distinguished from being a good housewife), but feeling guilty if this occupation makes her feel isolated and out of touch with the world she has been taught she would be a part of.

How can parents help to keep naturally differing interests in boys and girls from separating them, so that they become unaware of each others' hungers? For sympathy toward each other's needs is essential to good marriage relationships. There are ways, though they're sometimes unused. Fathers might help to raise the prestige of domesticity by taking more pride in their wives' good sense in handling the children than in their pies. Mothers might do a little off-hand educating of their sons' taste in color—instead of buying all their ties for them. They might point out to them that their sisters' chatter about feminine fripperies is not to be scorned: those colorful buttons and bows are what make other girls so attractive to them. Mothers—with the help of inventors of electrical appliances—are doing a good job of getting their sons to feel differently about housework. Teen-age boys may be learning more about how to be understanding husbands from washing machines and vacuum cleaners than from text-books.

Each sex needs to understand the other

We need to see to it that teen-agers, who will soon be husbands and wives, have more understanding and appreciation of each sex's special interests and needs. Parents could exert their influence toward providing more education for marriage and family living in high school, of which there is now too little. Given in college, it will not reach the bulk of our young people. Those who go on to college will not only have chances to take courses on marriage, but will also be more alike in their interests because they are exposed to a broader expanse of cultural thinking. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why marriages between college-trained men and women result in fewer divorces.

Parents, by refusing to act like stock-figure husbands and wives in cartoon jokes, can give their sons and daughters insight into how happiness in marriage is increased by learning something about the reasons back of what often seems like silly or unreasonable behavior. How, for example, a woman's desire for a new hat is not due to feminine vanity alone, but also to her desire for a symbol to her neighbors of her husband's being a "good provider." There are mixed reasons, too, why men like hunting and clubs, and fume over things like pineapple salad with a marshmallow on top.

A woman's resentment of her role may easily be communicated to her daughter. Those mothers who have gained some understanding of the plight many women find themselves in today, when women's concerns are no longer clearly defined, and who have worked out some solutions, can do much to help their daughters. The creative activities they engage in, whether they take the form of improved housekeeping methods, handicrafts,

work in the school library or cafeteria, or paid work, all serve as illustrations of how a woman who is primarily a homemaker can put her talents and energies to work.

Sometimes girls resent being girls. They develop a good deal of protest over the unfair advantages men seem to have over women in our way of life. But this may be a kind of cover-up for failure to see satisfactions in the feminine role they are expected to play.

If an older girl carries her hankering to be a boy to the extent of insisting on boyish clothing or haircut, and feels contempt for the kinds of adornment that girls usually like, her behavior can work mischief with the normal adjustment to the opposite sex that should come during adolescence. In such a case, it's worth inquiring into why her feelings about becoming a woman have gone awry. Could it be that her mother is so engrossed in her work, or her own good times, that she doesn't realize her daughter has reached an age when she needs a little fussing over, to make her feel more respected and important? Perhaps her mother seems unhappy because of a poor marriage relationship, is overburdened with child bearing, or has turned into a despairing household drudge. Even though her mother may not express her feelings, a girl's observation of any one of these situations may turn her against the possibility of a like future.

Or, it may be that her father wanted a son, and has tried to make her into an acceptable substitute for one. In order to live up to his desire for comradeship with her, she may have cast aside many of her normal interests. Theodora is an example of this. She was the second girl in the family and came when a boy was hoped for. Her name is a feminine version of her father's. In her mid-teens she is closely identified with her father's interests. Her delight over his giving her a shot-gun for Christmas seemed to her older sister to be "toadying" to him. That Theo plans on a career almost exclusively followed by men is fairly typical of girls who have

"The young boy has a difficult burden, usually starting on the day of birth—to be a 'man.' At the age of two, when he bangs his finger and cries, he is told to be a man and stop crying. But . . . he is unable to stop and so is made to feel that he is inferior by adult standards. At a little later age he will be able to stop crying, but will still have the desire to cry and this in turn will leave him with a feeling of inadequacy, because he has been taught that a man should not even have such a desire."

Clifford J. Sager, M. D.: The Concept of Aggression in Modern Psychiatry.
Mental Hygiene, 36: 210-219—p. 213.

adopted this attitude of disdain for their own femininity. Such a girl may wake up to find herself longing to be popular with boys, but unable to appeal to them because she just doesn't fit in with what a girl is "supposed" to be like. If her mother had recognized earlier that Theo's absorption in her father suggested her inability to identify with her mother, she might have been able to understand her daughter's need, and have figured out a way to a more rewarding mother-daughter relationship.

Another possibility that occasionally makes the establishment of opposite sex relationships awkward may exist when a girl is brought up in a family of boys. Quite naturally wanting to keep up with them, a girl may have a comradely, hail-fellow attitude toward boys, and become too independent to accept the little courtesies that they like to extend toward "the weaker sex." She may laugh off their desire to play the dominant male role just once in a while, and not know how to agree gracefully to their desire to be big, strong protectors.

Fathers can be a big help

Boys, too, can have problems about fitting into their traditional role. Not only do they want to achieve great things, but they early become aware that a lot is expected of them. Some feel a good deal of concern over how they are going to make good. The more secure a boy is in his relationship with his father, and the more he can admire his father, the readier he is to accept the responsibility of manhood. In the absence of a father, or of an understanding father, young teen-age boys have a great need of other men to look up to. Teachers, counsellors, the men for whom they work, the heroes they read about all exert influence. In one shop, two young fellows whose fathers had only recently come to the United States, and were unused to the easy-going relations between fathers and sons in this country, always called their employer "Dad," in a humorously affectionate way. Every adolescent boy needs a "Dad" to admire.

A boy who worries about how slowly he is maturing physically needs the reassurance his father can give him. Without an explanation he may get to feel that he will keep on being inferior in size and strength. The father of a slightly-built 15-year-old, who longed to get on the football team but was not heavy enough, cleverly played up his son's skill at tennis, quietly aiding him in excelling at something else he could take pride in.

When it is the interests of a boy, rather than his looks or his build, that are responsible for his differences from what is commonly expected of boys, the matter is more complex. If his interests include those that are more commonly thought of as feminine, a boy may be considered a "sissy"—something any normal boy shies away from. Thus Bill, who loved to stay in on Saturday afternoons to listen to the Metropolitan Opera on the radio, lived in dread of his neighborhood friends finding it out. In some circles liking opera would not be considered odd, but in the neighborhood where Bill lived, it would have been hooted at by most of the boys as effeminate.

Actually, if there were not a great deal of overlapping in what we think of as masculine and feminine traits, the two sexes would be sadly out of step. Everyone, to some degree, has some of the elements in his make up

that are considered typical of the opposite sex. It is only when much of a person's behavior reverses what is expected of his sex that society frowns on him. Parents can forestall criticism of a youth by helping him build up interests that will make him acceptable to his peers. The occasional boy who fails to show the usual interest in dating, or who greatly prefers taking girls' parts in theatricals, or who pays unusual attention to whether his sox, tie, and handkerchief all match may have developed these tendencies in self-defense, because he found himself outdistanced in the things boys are usually good at. Sometimes he is a boy who is either fatherless or whose father has not shared his activities and interests with him. A woman who has to bring up a son alone has to guard against keeping him too close to her, and perhaps—in rare instances, it is true—against influencing him toward typically feminine pursuits and likings.

One-parent families

Parents who must bring up their children alone often have misgivings about whether they are doing a good job. If it has been hard before, they say, it seems even harder in adolescence, when so many problems come up whose solutions might be simpler if husband and wife could talk them over together.

But in their favor, such parents often have their children's earlier understanding of what a source of help and strength they can be to their mother or father. And we all know the respect and admiration with which many people who are the products of such homes look upon the parent who so staunchly shouldered his or her double responsibility.

More homes are without fathers in adolescence than without mothers. Part of this is due to the shorter life expectancy of men, and part to the fact that custom, in the case of divorce, more often gives custody of the children to the mother than to the father.

So it is more commonly the mother who must make efforts to see that her children have opportunities for close association with an adult of the opposite sex, must find someone to serve as father-figure. On the way to becoming a man, having the friendship of an admired person strengthens a boy's belief in himself. The family friend or relative who can offer intimate companionship to a fatherless or motherless boy or girl performs a great

"The average adolescent, if he could only know that everyone else of his peer group is experiencing problems that are in many respects similar to his own, that they feel the same sense of inferiority, would feel much less troubled and much less alone than he ordinarily does."

Paul H. Landis: *Adolescence and Youth*.
New York: McGraw-Hill, 1945—p. 139.

service. Of course serving in this way need not be limited to one's own relatives or friends; many youth agencies value highly the help they get from citizens who give of their time and of themselves in Scout and other group and club activities.

In cases of divorce a parent has the added responsibility of taking great care not to tear down the respect and love a child may feel for the absent parent. John H., for example, knew his father, though he saw him infrequently, as a kind, loving person deeply interested in him. He was often torn emotionally while growing up, because he heard his mother's friends speak slightly of his "weak" father. To subject a child to the strain of divided loyalty destroys his peace of mind. It is important for him to feel that his parents are both worthy people. To refrain from criticism of the other parent is one of the hardest, and most essential, things divorced parents have to do. Hardest, because few people are saintly enough to be completely free of bitterness; essential, for their children's mental health.

A woman who has had to bring up her children alone is also one, very often, who has been obliged to work outside her home. She sometimes finds it hard to know just how to give her children added responsibility as they grow older, and how much they should have. She may have found helpers hard to get who were willing to let the children take much responsibility around the house. Added to this is her unwillingness to have the time when she is at home taken up in supervising her children's learning of certain tasks—even though she tries to make such work together enjoyable. With the coming of the teens she has in her favor their interest in having their home a pleasant meeting place for their friends. This may be an inducement for them to take on more in the way of keeping the house in order, for example, and helping to buy and cook meals. When all the family are away from home during the day it is easier to see that everyone must share in keeping household affairs running smoothly.

Family expectations are different

Different groups of boys and girls are brought up with very different beliefs and attitudes about their roles. We don't all live according to just one way of thinking. Different groups inherit many customs and ways carried over into the present from patterns long held in different countries. They are influenced by religious beliefs, by city and country habits, and by different economic backgrounds, too. There are still some families in which the parents consider their sons' education more important than that of their daughters, regardless of which have greater or less ability. Some families are not yet ready to accept the idea of the longer educational preparation which now seems necessary for all youth. A boy or girl who for one reason or another has to stop school early, and begin to fend for himself or herself, is sometimes cut off from mingling with the groups that by nature would be most congenial and stimulating.

Although two girls may both be 16 years old, one, because of her family—and neighborhood—patterns of living and thinking may seem older than the other.

Alice's father is an attorney, who makes such a comfortable living that Alice has had almost every wish gratified. A maid comes in to help her mother with housework, so Alice has rarely even had to do more than press out a dress for herself. She has sometimes been asked to baby-sit for neighbors, but she usually refuses, as she feels no need to earn money, and doesn't like the "bother" of looking after young children. Her father always takes her to and from school parties, club meetings or any other event of an evening.

Marge, a girl who sits next to her in several classes, is next to the oldest in a family of five children. She is dissatisfied with school, and now that she is 16 is thinking of getting a job. For her parents "see no sense" in her going on to graduate. At times when her mother has worked outside their home, Marge has had responsibility for taking care of the younger children and getting the evening meal. She usually coaxes the other children into doing the dishes, for she is "going steady" with a boy of 19, and they spend most evenings together. Because home study interferes with this is one of her main reasons for wanting to stop school. For quite a while she has worked both Saturday and Sunday as a part-time waitress, so she feels she's entitled to go out almost every night during the week. Her father works at a dance hall, where she and her boy friend often go after the movies.

Marge spends part of what she earns on clothes, but also contributes a little something at home, as does her older brother.

Her obligation to look after her younger brothers and sister just about ends as one or another reaches school age. After that, they roam about, picking up friends, and perhaps picking on enemies, in the street, as Marge did when she was their age.

Though Marge and Alice dress much alike, their likenesses even in appearance are on the surface. Alice's sweaters and skirts are expensive, in soft colors that Marge can't always find when she shops in the stores that have things at her prices.

But under this external appearance of similarity in the two girls lie some very great differences in standards and thinking and feeling about life. The expectations of Alice's parents have resulted in her conforming to the ways of her group. Their upbringing has stressed such things as good manners at table and when meeting people on social occasions, knowing the "proper" thing to do in many kinds of situation, as when traveling. In these superficial ways Alice seems as "mature" as Marge; but underneath, the variety of experiences Marge has had, and the fact that she has been allowed to find her way without much supervision, have made her familiar with the raw stuff of life to a degree far beyond Alice's experience.

At school, most of the teachers have leaned to the kind of expectancy that rules the group Alice's parents come from, for it is more like their own bringing up than Marge's is. Also, they went to college, as Alice expects to do. It is unfortunate, but true, that many of Marge's teachers, not understanding her as well as they do Alice (who conforms more in surface ways to their ideas of what a 16-year-old girl should be like) will be a little one-sided, and show more interest in her than in Marge. They may even unconsciously favor Alice when it comes to marks; at least some educators

suspect that girls in her position have achieved a slightly unfair advantage when college scholarships are under consideration.

How the pattern of culture affects marriage may be seen in these same two girls. Marge at 16 is already engaged. But because she is so young, she has had little chance to meet a variety of boys. Alice may, of course, plunge into marriage early and suddenly, with as little basis for choice as Marge. But the chances are that she will postpone marriage longer and in her wider contacts in high school and college, have opportunities to know many young men on a friendly basis. It is to be hoped that she will see them in everyday situations, both at work and at play. Though Marge and her boy friend enjoy being together, the interests of neither of them, at this point, have matured enough so that they can be sure of being able to build a life-long companionship.

On the other hand, we can't predict that their marriage won't turn out as successfully as the one Alice may make. Marge's emotional stability, because she has had to face up to practical experiences, may be greater than Alice's. In a sense, Alice has been under-privileged, in having less chance to come to grips with the realities of life.

The boys Marge and Alice know may come from homes where ways of living, and expectations, are as different as in the case of the two girls.

Family values differ

Boys like John and Peter may have a lot in common. They may both be raising love birds, or hamsters, or have some other hobby that brings them together. But how they will spend the money they earn may be very different. One may be saving for college, the other for a car. John's family may play down display, and have a low-priced car though well able to afford a better one. (If, that is, the family didn't spend so much on musical instruments and records.) Peter's father, on the other hand, would not feel happy without a car that called attention to his earning power. To him, the car is a symbol of hard-won success, something that proves to his neighbors that his lack of much formal education hasn't held him back.

"It is of course impossible to describe the American scene. There is not one American scene, but many scenes . . . Rural life differs from urban life; . . . boys live in an environment which differs in important (but often subtle) ways from the environment that impinges upon girls. Within a city, Italian, German, and Jewish neighborhoods may each have its own set of customs and Chinatown may seem a world apart."

Raymond G. Kuhlen: *The Psychology of Adolescent Development*.
New York: Harper, 1952—p. 149.

What are these fathers expecting of their sons, and how are those sons being influenced as far as values go?

These illustrations merely point out a few of the varieties of family experience that adolescents are exposed to, and a few of the reasons we see such a wide range of vision, ambition, and standard among groups of adolescents, who seem on the surface so much alike. Few general rules can be laid down for understanding or guiding adolescent behavior when each youth is the product not only of his own peculiar combination of talents, temperament, and physique, but also of the forces, culture, and experiences that have played on his parents, and have thus subtly influenced his hopes, his beliefs and his attitudes.

Becoming adjusted to the opposite sex



One of the things often remarked about boys and girls is the way their attitudes toward each other shift at different stages. Little children, before they have any self-consciousness, enjoy each other wholeheartedly. Then, about the time their school life begins, their changing interests and needs make them begin to draw apart in a good many of their activities. Later, a time arrives when there seems to be an exaggerated separation that almost amounts to scorn of each sex by the other. But this attitude doesn't mean they aren't really very much aware of one another. The teasing that boys carry on is flattering to the girls; and while girls' taunts may infuriate boys, they assure them they're being noticed.

Perhaps one reason for this mock dislike is the more advanced development of girls. It's a source of annoyance to a boy to be shorter and lighter in weight than most of the girls in his room at school. His masculinity is outraged by this inferior position, even though he may know that it won't last.

Not being ready for social life that includes girls, boys stick together. At parties, the boys huddle to one side, depending on numbers for their strength. The girls, put out by the boys' rejection of dancing, conversation, or games, spend their energies vainly trying to think up ways of making things go to their liking.

Because of this unequal development, strained social situations are almost bound to occur in high school groups. Girls are attracted to older boys, who are on a par with them. But if they go out with boys a grade or two ahead of them, what's to become of the girls in those grades? Many a high school prom—especially if girls are not permitted to invite outsiders—has caused heartaches because of the girls' lack of partners.

Many girls have to take out their romantic yearnings on boys they see, but never meet—admiring from afar. The passionate and mass devotion of bobby-soxers to a current movie star or TV crooner affords a safe way of providing someone to dream about. This is the age when almost any male figure, if personable enough, whether a clerk in the neighborhood drugstore, the tenor in the church choir, or even a high-school teacher may be the object of a romantic devotion of which he, happily in most cases, remains completely unaware. One pudgy girl whom the boys at school ignored exerted herself every morning for months to reach the bus early enough to get the seat behind the driver. As she could get little conversation out of him, she had to discharge her feelings by gazing at the back of his head. The qualities that have begun to take shape in the mind of the love-dreaming girl must find expression in a person, no matter how little the real person may match up with the imagined charms.

While this may seem amusing to adults, it's far from laughable to those going through it. And it satisfies a perfectly healthy need in the girl, at a time when she is not ready for the relationships involved in lasting love.

Boys, of course, go through the same stage. Although they may be less whole-souled in their preoccupation with romantic love than girls, their talk among themselves is about as much of girls as of sports. But, "girl-crazy" as an occasional boy may be, ambitious plans for the future absorb much of boys' attention. Love and marriage are not the be-all and end-all to them that they are to girls at this stage. As our culture veers toward a pattern in which girls more commonly think of a career in addition to marriage this difference between boys and girls may be less noticeable.

The romantic idea of falling in love, so much emphasized in song, story, and drama, is not necessarily strongly associated with desire for physical expression in early adolescence. Perhaps this is truer of girls than of boys, on whom the taboos of our culture do not weigh so heavily. Just being together and talking things over is a step in the fascinating business of finding out what the other sex is like. But if, as Erikson suggests of this stage, many adolescents aren't as interested in embracing as they are in conversing, it may be that they are afraid of the embrace and its implications, rather than that they do not desire it.

The age-old popularity of kissing games, so skittishly approached, is testimony to this. Dancing, swimming, skating are all conventionally accepted ways of meeting youth's desire for precourtship familiarities. The stage before this, of snatching at each other's belongings and pulling pigtailed, is an early and awkward expression of the awakening desire for encounters between boys and girls. The hand-holding, the arm-around-the-waist of strolling teen-agers are permissible ways of expressing the growing desire for physical closeness.

Parent-child relationships change

At no time, actually, has there been absence of attraction to the opposite sex. But the really strong and deep love relationship, before adolescence, is to parents. If this love between parent and child has been one that truly satisfied the child's needs, the adolescent is in a good position when the

time comes to make the transition to a love relationship with the opposite sex. Such parental love presupposes a warmth in babyhood and childhood that gives children the comfort of strongly supporting arms, but arms that do not clutch at them, and hold them back from life experiences. It is a love that looks forward to the time when the young person will have the maturity to enter upon marriage instead of having pangs about "losing" a child.

Naturally the parent-child love relations are going to be different in boys and in girls. A girl and a boy love their father and their mother in different ways, responding to the things in them that are characteristic of men and of women. Most children's closer relationship is, naturally enough, with their mothers, who usually care for them in babyhood. This first strong attachment to someone of their own sex may be one reason why some girls find it hard to make the break later from this intimate, one-sex love, to the opposite-sex love involved in marriage.

The boy starts out by having a close attachment to someone of the opposite sex—his mother. This may be a help to him when he reaches the time to make a transition to an interest in girls. But it may also be a hindrance, if his mother has, without knowing it, taken advantage of the affection he feels for her, and encouraged him to hold so fast to her that he finds it hard to let go.

Even though things move smoothly, and the passage into a mature love is accomplished, a loved image once in a while gets between the man or woman and their marriage partner. The wife who can never find just the recipe for the kind of crunchy cookies that her husband wistfully recalls enjoying in his childhood, and the husband who has to listen to his wife's remarks about how clever her father was about making household repairs are sufferers from this not-quite-relinquished adoration of mother and father.

Whether it is as common for mothers to try to hold onto their sons as it seems popular today to believe is questionable. For every mother who is reluctant to give up being the main woman figure in her son's life there may be another who is both pleased and proud when her son shows plainly that he's able to get off on the right foot with girls. If a woman is happy in marriage, if her life is satisfactory in this basic relationship, she does not have to clutch her son (or daughter) to her and try to prolong the dependent love that was such a pleasure to her in their childhood.

"Supervise youth, accept them, believe in them, but don't put them in a small cage where you can watch them all the time."

Edward Greenwood, M. D.: Midcentury White House Conference, Panel 23.

Fathers play an important part

In between early childhood and the coming of sexual maturity is a period when a boy's father is of specially great importance to him. In order to establish the manliness that every boy grasps at, he turns to his father as his object of admiration, and gains immeasurably if his father is able to give him the strong backing he needs. The maleness of his father's interests offers him a chance to get free of the constant and overpowering association with women which is the lot of the great majority of American boys. Fathers need to take every chance that offers to share their lives with their sons; boys welcome being taken into their dads' confidence, whether it's political views they discuss, a father's boyhood work experience, or the problems a man comes up against day by day.

This period becomes a time for turning away from, and scorning, feminine things and qualities. The exaggerated disdain of boys for girls may be a protective device grown out of our way of life to strengthen boys' solidarity and he-man-ness. And at the same time it serves as a protest against a home environment heavily loaded on the feminine side.

Lucky is the boy whose father has been able to live his parental role in the full sense, who is close enough to his son so that they have interests in common and can share fun—fishing, or hunting, or baseball, or carpentry or music together. As one much-loved father puts it, he “forgets his sons have grown up,” for they still all go to ball games and are “boys” together.

But even before a boy has entered his teens, he has become aware of girls and women in a new way. Though he spends most of his time with his own sex, he's greatly curious about girls. While boys may shy away from girls socially, they are extremely conscious of them, of their looks, their developing figures, and the fact that much of their behavior is so unlike boys'. Growing hesitant to talk over his questions with his father, a boy appreciates the man-to-man discussions he gets among his friends, and in those school, church, or other groups that recognize his need, and provide opportunities for the health education teacher, the Scout leader, the coach, or other men specifically trained to give sound guidance to discuss his concerns with him. Such talks together are often brought in as a part of biology courses, in order to fit the boy's immediate preoccupations into the larger picture of life's meanings. They offer safeguards against the old hypocritical pretense that ignorance is the same as innocence, an attitude that often resulted in turning sex interest into something dirty, something too shameful to be admitted.

A girl, likewise, needs to have a close relationship with her father. To have her father show his pride in her when he brings friends home with him, and his enjoyment in her companionship when they go places together can build up a girl's poise and belief in herself. He can add to her pride in becoming a woman. And her father's conversation can give her some idea of the subjects men like to talk about.

While girls are building an image of the man they would like to marry—and girls in their teens begin, even if not quite consciously, to measure the boys they meet against an ideal marriage partner—they are depending

greatly on the father, or father-figure in their lives, such as an uncle or guardian, to fill in that picture. The girl whose father is not living builds dreams around him, even though she may not remember him well.

Girls are likely to be, in one sense, their father's favorites. There need be no jealousy in a man toward his daughter, but often there's a fairly sizeable amount of it in the relationship between him and his son, who can become his rival. But there's a catch in this fondness of a father for his daughter. It's envy of the boys she likes. Sometimes a father tries to save his daughter for a prince who never comes. In his fear of their taking her away from him, he may make fun of the boys she dates with. This can make her more critical than is healthy. And there are still fathers who "see red," as Sara's father said he did, at the idea of their 16-year-old daughters having a steady boy friend—this in an age when "going steady" is an accepted rule among teen-agers themselves, even though the "steadiness" may be of only a few weeks' or months' duration.

A father who brings up children alone has a special opportunity to build a rewarding relationship with his daughters. Many girls in such families become unusually close to their fathers, confiding in them and getting in return a man's point of view on many things. As a result, they may have more understanding with which to enter upon marriage.

One influence is at work for which fathers are not responsible, but which they might help to outwit or counteract. This is the reading habits which girls may fall into. The light novel (or movie) that leads its heroine into a forever-after-happy marriage is not very solid fare as marriage preparation. Widening and deepening the reading interests of adolescents is something in which both parents can have a share. Not by forcing on their children books that are "good for" them, but by suggesting a rich selection to choose from. The values of good literature in enriching the imagination are limitless. Boys and girls who are dreaming of the future can find in romantic (but not sugary) novels, in poems, plays and autobiographies stuff on which to build their hopes, and also get from them insight into human relationships that penetrates deep into their feeling and thinking. In family discussions of the people, events and places met in books and on the screen parents have a means of entering their children's lives in a way that is not personal or moralizing.

Parents' example sets the pattern

One way of helping teen-agers to get some perspective on relations with the opposite sex is pointedly neglected. Over and over again, in studies of marriage, husbands and wives have said that they would like to have their partners express their affection more openly. Each may take for granted that the other is loving, especially after years of marriage, when the relation between them has settled down to a solid but less romantic basis than at first. But expression of this affection would be one good way of letting children see, and make no mistake about realizing, that their parents are happy together.

Children sometimes see cross looks, they hear hasty words of disagreement. But do they often see the making up? Quarreling between their parents

can be a frightening, deeply disturbing thing to them. It is important for them to understand that parents' irritation at and criticism of each other doesn't mean there isn't strong, deep love between them, as well. It may help them to feel less guilty over the times they have felt they hated their parents, whom they also know they love, if it is made plain to them that this is a common failing among human beings, and that it's not limited to childhood; that because we care for people deeply, we take it harder when their feelings and actions and ours, which we somehow expect should be alike, are not unfailingly so by any means. The more open families are in their recognition that loving and hating can go side by side, the less anxiety children are likely to have over personality and opinion clashes.

Because disagreement is disappointing, we sometimes forget that it is useful when it shows up a problem that needs to be identified and solved. It should not be suppressed—but our feelings of pleasure in and affection for one another should not be suppressed, either. Parents who make no secret of their love for each other are helping, perhaps much more than they realize, to prepare their sons and daughters for comfortable, supportive relations in marriage. Young people, in observing how their parents care for each other and care for their children, are getting a lesson in the “caring for others” which is the only basis on which real marriage and real parenthood can be built. To be able to “care” in the deeper sense grows out of giving the other kind of care.

Dating

Although parents know very well that having a social life apart from their parents is a necessity to their teen-agers, they almost invariably feel uneasy when the time for dating strikes. While they'd worry if their daughter wasn't attractive to boys, they worry if she is!

“The time interval between generations is brought into sharp focus in the closeness of the family situation. Parents may view youth as rebellious, while youth views parents as old-fashioned. There is thus a lack of common ground and common understanding. Particularly is this true of moral views. Many parents cannot accept as ‘right’ and proper many behaviors that are commonplace today, but which were deemed wrong in the days of their youth. The result is that many borderline wrongs represent sources of parent-youth conflict.”

Raymond G. Kuhlen: *The Psychology of Adolescent Development*.
New York: Harper, 1952—p. 570.

Parents, instead of fussing about early dating, would do better to accept it gladly, as one of the evidences of all-around healthy personality. Unless the transfer of major interest to the opposite sex is made during adolescence, it is rarely made satisfactorily. It is something to be hoped for, rather than looked at with suspicion.

Dating doesn't mean courtship; it means dating just for the sake of dating, for the prestige it brings. You don't date with a boy you positively don't like, but you can have a good time—and be seen by the crowd to be “regular”—with one in whom you're not overly interested.

The usual age of first going out with a boy seems to have lowered somewhat in the last 30 years. While 16 used to be considered a suitable age for first dates, 13- and 14-year-olds nowadays often have dates. It is usual for a high proportion of city girls to have their first dates before they are 15, a little earlier than country girls are likely to. The first date for boys, by 16 or earlier, shows a similar tendency for city boys to begin dating girls slightly earlier than those living in the country.

Often these first dates consist of foursomes, two pairs of girls and boys going out together. Double-dating like this may be popular because there's less chance of the awkwardness of not finding anything to talk about. This is one of the bugbears of young people who are just beginning to go together, and are not yet at ease in small talk. Perhaps it is not so often true of those whose parents have made a point of opening their home to their children's friends, of entertaining people of various ages, and who have made a practice of drawing their children into the conversation at such times. A feeling of social ease doesn't blossom all at once, nor does it unfold naturally except where the soil has been prepared.

Dating is a special problem for the country boy who must finish his chores before he goes out, and who sometimes has trouble about transportation. But his girl won't mind riding in a truck, if that's what he can get the use of!

Families in which there are girls only, or boys only, may need to make a special effort to see that companionship with the opposite sex is freely available. This is perhaps most easily managed through school, church, or other youth groups, such as a Boy Scout patrol being asked to meet with its opposite in the Girl Scouts, or a school choral or Hi-Y group meeting at the home of one member. No matter how banged-up the piano is, it will get a workout. Social groups in homes are popular only when the parents involved are unobtrusive, and offer no heavyhanded chaperonage. It is a happy day in the teen-age boy's life, too, when he can get a driver's license, and no longer has to depend on his family to get him and his girl to and from a party.

One reason the custom of “going steady” has taken hold may be the comfort it gives that one will not be left dangling without a partner at the many mixed affairs high school students take part in. Boys have a reputation for waiting till the last minute to ask a girl to such events; if you are going steady you have less hesitation in speaking up about an occasion ahead of time. This is especially true where the custom of “going dutch” is common, so that the burden of cost doesn't fall entirely on the boy. If

this custom were more widely accepted, many a girl would not have to fret for fear of not having dates. Girls' clubs occasionally get around the problem by having parties to which they do the inviting.

Handicaps to social life

The extra expenses involved in high-school life seriously hold many young people back from occasions when they would have a chance for the normal, natural associations so vitally necessary in these years. Fees for football and baseball games, club dues, special class functions, costumes for school play or entertainments—a thousand and one little extras—mount up so that many boys and girls are unable to take part in the very things that would encourage good adjustment with the opposite sex.

Another kind of handicap applies to those rural teen-agers who live too far away to be able to enjoy the after-school sessions in the drug-store, or to be on committees that meet out of school hours. Some communities take care of this by having special buses on occasion, an hour or two after the regular school buses take students home. But some farm families count so much on the help their older children give after school that they object to their not coming directly home. Another problem crops up when parents protest against driving their children back to school in the evening, or, when they are old enough, letting them take the car. Some even discourage their boys and girls from joining 4-H clubs or the Future Farmers or Homemakers of America. Perhaps fewer young people on farms would hurry off to the city as soon as they leave school if their parents would make more of an effort to see that they had a satisfying social life from early adolescence on.



Emotions in adolescence

To a very young child, everything centers around himself. *His* needs and wishes are all that matter, and he lets go of his feelings in a completely uncontrolled way. Whether they're feelings of love, or rage, or fear, he lets them come out. We watch without surprise when a baby who is asked to share his toys clutches at them and bursts into tears if urged to give one up.

Though teen-age boys and girls have feelings that are just as strong as ever, they have them under better control. The "I" who was all that mattered in babyhood long ago became aware that others' "I's" must be considered. Society has brought pressure to bear, and maturation has been going on, too. Almost any adolescent will fly off the handle now and then, when angered. But such displays are more often within the family; home is the one place where people know they'll be accepted in spite of their outbursts.

The pleasant emotions, like sympathy, show the adolescent's growing understanding. Gordon ungrudgingly gives part of his allowance toward a fund for children he has never seen, in Greece or India. Mary combs her shelves for books to hand on to children who have none.

Adolescents—unless they are very immature for their years—no longer live in the moment, demanding satisfaction *now*. Tom, at 13 or 14, can mostly resist impulses to spend his money on trivial nonsense, and save many months toward a new bicycle or a couple of weeks at camp. Nancy, though she says she "can't wait" to learn the outcome of a contest she's been in, and plainly shows her excitement, doesn't really go to pieces.

The control of anger involves learning to know when it's worth while to get angry. When the emotion pushes a person into working hard at finding a way out of his difficulty it's wholesome; the mild irritation a boy feels when he can't find out why his car won't start pushes him into trying in all manner of ways to find out what's wrong.

The weight of public opinion, too, has a share in teaching children to manage their anger. Sandra, at 14, can take a jibe that hurts. Her only response at the moment may be a flush; she manages to hold in any other expression of her anger until she can pour out her humiliation to her chum. Nor does Tom talk back to the coach who has bawled him out; he works out his resentment, with set lips, in the more determined plunge at the ball that his coach was counting on.

These ways of acting—being able to wait, to tolerate criticism, to shunt strong feelings into outlets that will do no harm, or that actually solve problems—show that Tom and Sandra, like others of their years, are becoming able to handle their feelings acceptably.

Fears, too, are under better control—or perhaps we should say some of them are. The more obvious kinds of fear no longer result in the panic a young child may display when a barking dog runs at him. But some fears may be so well controlled that they are hidden. Society's disapproval of the weakness that show of fear is supposed to betray is severe. But restraint of fear, that keeps it under the surface, can lead to trouble. The bold self-assertiveness of many a boy and girl who try to be witty or the life of the party and are snubbed for their pains is often a cover-up for insecurity and fear of not being popular.

Fears are sometimes hidden

Fears that come right out at home are not necessarily the ones that bother adolescents—or their parents—most. It's the ones the child is ashamed of or only half aware of that parents find it hard to help with or even to know about. They may hear fears expressed about not passing courses at school, or not making the team or getting on the cast of a school play. For these are fears the youngster can focus on. They are in his line of vision; it's socially acceptable to have these kinds of fear. But his anxieties are behind his back, waiting to jump on him.

Such anxieties are not often shared with parents, though they may be suspected. What about a hunch you have—not put into words—that people look down on you? About your suspicion that you'll always be snubbed by the very people you'd like to go around with? What is it that makes you tongue-tied when you try to ask a girl for a date? Some worries of this sort creep into the lives of a good many teen-agers. It may be only imagination that makes Jim think people are "leaving him out." Perhaps his shyness has made him invisible, rather than that he is actively cold-shouldered. But if he feels this way, signs of it are almost sure to be present, if we are keen enough to read them. It may be that Jim has what he thinks are real reasons for not going to the school square dance ("I want to stay home and finish this book"), or not joining a group going swimming ("It's too cold to swim today").

If we think these are only flimsy cover-up excuses, there are things we can do toward setting things right. A membership in the "Y," where Jim could gain confidence by having swimming lessons, might help. As to his need for practice in feeling at ease in social groups, his parents might take more responsibility than they have in the past for things like seeing that plans for the supper programs at the church, where many teen-agers gather on Sunday nights, involve unobtrusive ways of helping boys and girls feel comfortable together. Or, if he lives on a farm, Jim may need more chances to stay after school and take part in some of the extracurricular activities that would lead to his feeling easier in the company of girls.

A family life where having company is so usual that no company manners or china have to be got out and dusted off for visitors can help prevent fear in social situations. When family friends of all ages have been in and out of a house constantly, there's little chance of teen-agers developing social awkwardness. One of the good, if selfish, reasons why parents need to share in community activities is because their children benefit by falling naturally into the social life of their neighborhood. This is especially hard for working mothers to do, but their adolescent children are the very ones whose social opportunities are likely to be fewer because their mothers have little time for entertaining. Their friends, though, can be counted on to enjoy sharing the simplest meal.

Sometimes parents may read into their children's behavior something that is not there. *They* may be the ones who are anxious, quite unnecessarily. Not all boys and girls are eager to be in the social swim every minute. There are great individual differences in the amount of social contact that young people want, and great positive values in lone creative activities. The thinker has to be by himself a good deal. Maybe the book that Jim wants to stay home and finish is stirring up important ideas in his mind. A train of thought may bear fruit only after many hours of reverie: the speculations about gravity that came to a head when Newton saw the apple fall had been absorbing his mind for a long time.

As for the deep anxieties that come from family situations not understood by children, or deeply distressing to them, it doesn't help parents to get downhearted. Braced by parental courage, many adolescents have learned to live with trouble, whether the trouble is death, desertion, alcoholism, mental illness, or some equally heavy burden. They have adjusted as they would to some crippling physical condition. If they have not been able to shoulder the burden, it is all too likely that they will, by the time they are in their teens, be showing symptoms of unhappiness that require help parents cannot give, but that should be sought from child guidance clinic workers skilled in studying such disturbances.

In one adolescent, anxieties are endured, or conquered; in another, mixed-up emotions result in wild, unreasonable behavior that is so noticeable or shocking it cannot be ignored.

Fear that one will not be able to make good, the fear that comes from being unloved and misunderstood, can break out in stealing, or lying, or generally uncontrollable behavior. It's as if such an adolescent said, "All right! I'll show them I don't care!" The bravado acts that result get the youth into hot water—at home, at school, or with the law.

When an adolescent, boy or girl, does outrageous things, wild things that are hard to account for, we can be pretty sure that he is at the end of his rope, emotionally. His fears have become so unmanageable that he *must* call attention to himself. He's so badly in need of help that he strikes out blindly. What frustrations he or she is suffering from only highly skilled and sympathetic specialists can discover. In such a case the school counselor, the family doctor, the public health nurse, or the child welfare worker can be of help, and, if necessary, refer parents to a source of psychiatric study.

Even the expression of love and affection, those emotions that can serve such desirable purposes, must, in order to be socially acceptable, undergo change in adolescence. Adolescents may in private, or in letters, poems, or diaries still give vent to affection rather freely but public display would seem inappropriate in our kind of society.

Parents may need to remind themselves not to encourage, out of their own need, the continuance of the close bonds that should gradually be replaced by a different kind of love. Giving boys and girls opportunities for wide friendships among their own sex, and for natural, informal companionship with the opposite sex is to some extent, at least, within the power of parents.

The intimacy of the family has prepared the adolescent for intimacy with others, if it has done its job well. Parents can congratulate themselves if they find their boys' and girls' personalities showing the warmth and spontaneity that help to insure their finding friends and eventually forming a fine love relationship.

Fortunately, the proving ground of adolescence—for it is a period that tests out the soundness of earlier training and expectations—is passed over safely by most young people.

We all carry with us through life some fragments of the childish or even infantile ways of handling emotion that we should have outgrown—bits of sulkiness, of jealousy, or cruelty, perhaps. Parents can't, in the present state of our knowledge, at any rate, prevent or wholly do away with the scars left by experiences their children pass through. But they can be enormously helpful if they provide the best emotional climate they know how all along, and give an example of sturdy facing up to life. Our ability to laugh, to find humor in our follies and mistakes, is a precious gift, and a far more desirable thing to share with our children than the blame which we sometimes insist on dismally lugging around with us, to no good end.

“The best way to help our adolescent children with these problems is continually to assure them that one does not act out one’s feelings in society, no matter what those feelings happen to be. What we really want the child to do is to achieve some control over his impulses to act out all his feelings as he did in infancy and early childhood. The achievement of such control is the hallmark of adult behavior.”

Milton E. Kirkpatrick, M. D.: *The Mental Hygiene of Adolescence in the Anglo-American Culture.*

Mental Hygiene, 36: 394-403, July 1952—p. 401.

Dealing with new impulses

The emotions and impulses that come with sexual maturation are new but the way the young adolescent will respond to them is not. His response will be the product of the feelings and attitudes that have been growing up in him about sex over many years.

Many children have had their early curiosity about their bodies and about where babies come from casually and naturally answered by their parents, so that no feeling of shame came about for having asked them. Such children have probably arrived in the teens with enough information about the new things that are happening to them so that they are not taken entirely by surprise; although as one author suggests, what was told them may have been something like talking about colors to a blind person.

All told, the impulses arising in connection with sex will probably be managed pretty much according to whatever other patterns of behavior have been built into the life of the boy or girl. Consideration of others, self-restraint, generosity, self-respect, and the ability to give and accept affection—or the opposites of these qualities—are characteristics that apply more or less generally to our behavior rather than to any one area of life. If he has seen his father and mother deferring to each other's wishes, and sometimes sacrificing their own desires in favor of other people's needs, it is likely that he will think of these ways as natural ways.

Everything a teen-ager has been learning and practicing about emotional control will apply. Is he beginning to grasp the *why* of the rules he is expected to follow? Is he strong enough to stand up for his own beliefs, or does he feel obliged to follow the crowd? Is he learning to bear the strain of waiting until the appropriate time comes for greatly anticipated pleasures? There is much likelihood that he will respond to the sex impulses that are developing in much the same ways as he has been responding to other things. He will probably tolerate in this area the demands of the culture he lives in to much the same extent that he assents to other rules.

The demands will vary a good deal with the social groups in which children are brought up. For reasons that are as yet largely guessed at, what is acceptable sexual behavior in one group is thought of differently in another. The regulation of sexual behavior will mostly be based on the training boys and girls have received at home, and on the standards that are recognized in the circles in which they move.

If parents have been furnishing guidance that has really helped their children to handle strong feelings, adolescents will probably not be overwhelmed by the added part sexual needs play in their lives.

Although some anxiety in regard to sex is a normal part of growing up in our culture, adolescents who get into serious trouble in connection with sex are likely to be boys and girls who are either unhappy and insecure, and so seek the reassurance of being needed by someone, or whose aggressive behavior is a blundering attempt to make up for frustration or lack of guidance. Such instances are by no means rare.

Early acceptance of the body as something to be respected and treated well paves the way for a healthy recognition of sexual impulses appearing in adolescence as something wholly natural and normal. If parents have been able, in whatever informal, unrehearsed teaching about sex goes on in the home, to feel free of hesitation and embarrassment, the results can be expected to be helpful to their children.

But even to such parents a time may come when intimacy between them and their children lessens. Parents who have had no trouble about finding a meeting ground with their children before now begin to have embarrassments and hesitations which are new and unexpected. They may feel surprised or even guilty over no longer being able to talk and act naturally about the problems their boys and girls are facing.

Withdrawal from parents is a necessary part of growing up. As has been said, remaining attached to a parent would mean an inability to establish the intimate relation with a person of the opposite sex that is a crowning achievement of becoming mature. By midadolescence young people are standing on the threshold of this new love relationship. Before them is a door their parents cannot open for them.

With the dawning realization that he is the product of his parents' sexual life, an adolescent must draw apart from them. His own sexual life must be as inviolable as theirs. He would shrink from intruding upon their feelings, and he rightly feels they must not obtrude into his.

It is easy to see that it would be a mistake for parents to force themselves to take on, at a ticklish period in their children's lives, through "duty," a job for which they feel a natural disinclination. If they have not, in the past, given their children factual information as required, this is hardly the time for trying to fill in omissions. They can, however, find excellent material in books and pamphlets, plays, stories, novels, and even movies whose approach to the boy and girl is impersonal, and therefore less apt to create emotional tension. To talk over characters in fiction, and their problems, removes the barrier of personal relationships, and puts the discussion on a plane where neither parents' nor children's feelings are deeply involved.

Reinforce rules with reasons

When explaining rules of conduct to young people—the *why* of prohibition of extremely late hours, of going to questionable places of amusement, or the like—parents will presumably be listened to with more respect if they keep to a factual approach than if they moralize.

Discussion of behavior when on dates might be taken as an example. Once a girl or boy is aware of the much greater freedom for association with the opposite sex enjoyed by young people in this country than in many other cultures very similar to our own, he or she may be readier to acknowledge an obligation to live up to the expectations such freedom places on them. And why not take our young people into our confidence and point out that some of the worries parents have are a result of the fact that there is such a long gap in years between the time when sexual maturation comes about, and the time when young people are ready to enter on courtship and marriage?

The question of petting

Some boys and girls, when questioned under circumstances that allow them to speak freely, say that they believe they must do some petting in order to be popular. But just as many show by their answers that this is not always true; boys remark that "some girls seem to expect it," but go on to say that the girls they like best to date with are those who discourage intimacies.

Studies made up to the present give a confused picture. Petting, under one name or another, is as old as mankind. We cannot say definitely that it is connected with later marital poor adjustment, nor can we say positively that it may contribute to effective sex relations after marriage. What we can do is to be honest. To be told "We don't know" is more helpful than to be put off with obvious platitudes. Teen-agers can, without being frightened, be made aware of the risk of being overwhelmed by the strong urges that petting may awaken. This may act as a sounder brake than the warnings so often relied on. After all, adolescents are both idealistic and romantic.

The community has responsibilities, too

Much more effective than a lot of talk is the provision by parents and community organizations of plenty of opportunities for desirable social contacts between boys and girls. Dancing, picnicking, hiking; sports like tennis and skating; working together on a school paper or play, in church or school clubs of various sorts; centers for creative enjoyment of painting, or music, or other arts—all afford natural outlets for the urge to enjoy the companionship of the opposite sex.

We keep telling adolescents to wait, wait, wait. To wait for jobs, to wait for love, to wait for independence, to wait until they are old enough to take part in the affairs of the world. What would we have them do while they wait?

One of the student delegates at the 1950 White House Conference on Children and Youth suggested one good way of letting teen-agers feel involved in affairs. She said, "If we are to assume leadership when adults,

"In preparation for marriage the home and family circle are of primary importance. The chief contribution of the home lies in the attitude and values which young people develop in response to their own parents. After the home come the church, the school and the community, all of which in turn makes their specific contributions in preparing young people for marriage."

Abraham Stone, M. D.: Midcentury White House Conference, Panel 25.

we must first experience being members and eventually leaders of our own youth community planning groups.”

To adults, who have calmed down and slowed down, the whirl of activities in which most adolescents like to live may seem unnecessary. They sometimes look on with weary tolerance, instead of thinking of the need of an array of such activities as imperative. Imperative, that is, if we are to comply with the needs of youth for something more than year after year of school while adolescence is being bridged.

Now is the time when young people are bursting with energy and spirits. There are many community projects, in both small and large places, to which they could make a splendid contribution—and, at the same time, perhaps, get a chance to work off their irritation at the sometimes frustrating ways of their culture. They have scope in working and playing together to form opinions and judgments, to send up trial balloons of liking for many persons, of both sexes. Having chances to get to know a variety of boys, or girls, is a safeguard against the infatuation that sometimes threatens a young person who has deep longings for companionship with the opposite sex but few objects to center attention on.

Health needs of adolescents



Teen-agers have too many things on their minds to be thinking much about taking care of their health. They care about their appearance—but that's a very different matter from being interested in eating the right foods, sleeping enough, and having regular physical check-ups.

This should be a period in which boys and girls are taking more responsibility in every phase of their lives. Whether they do so in respect to health depends partly on the kind of encouragement they are getting from their parents toward growing up and partly on how successfully the health education they are getting at school takes hold. In any case, there must be continuing efforts by parents to keep conditions at home on the positive side.

For health means more than just freedom from defects or illness. It means a balance on the plus side, a soundness and robustness that discourage invading infections, whether by germs or worries. A healthy adolescent is one whose spirits and body are both vigorous.

Although the death rate during this period is low, many small physical defects show up when draftees for service in the Armed Forces are examined. A thorough physical examination once or twice during the high school years is considered by many physicians to be preferable to more frequent superficial ones. Schools should be encouraged to use the newer screening programs that pick up, for example, cases of diabetes and tuberculosis. Annual chest X-ray programs in many communities provide a valuable opportunity to discover early signs of tuberculosis. A tuberculosis infection in early childhood that was so mild as to pass unnoticed can sometimes flare up suddenly and in more serious form during the rapid growth period preceding adolescence.

Thoughtful parents will keep in mind that good health is not achieved unless all the different factors in a young person's life are working together to produce it. His health depends on good living conditions in general, on proper food, sleep, exercise and relaxation; and surrounding and interwoven with all these, whether he feels happy and satisfied with his life. A slowdown in growth sometimes coincides with a disturbance in a child's emotional life. This underlines that what we call "mental health" cannot be separated from physical health—the two are thoroughly interdependent.

Perhaps mention ought to be made of the occasional parent, more often a mother, who oversees her children's health to such an extent that they take it for granted they are delicate plants. A girl who is fussed over every time she doesn't feel just right may find it so comforting that she begins to plead illness every time she comes up against something she wants to escape. If she is afraid of social situations, or school examinations, she may get to the point where a headache really comes on as a result of her worry. The possibility of becoming a slave to trumped-up methods of escaping difficulties is a grave one. It suggests the need of better ways of giving support to a timid person than to encourage the feeling that the cause of the trouble is physical. It is true that the physical symptoms can take over, and disguise the real source of trouble, but this is unlikely to happen when young people have been brought up to think of themselves as sturdily healthy.

Boys, so naturally inclined to get into rough and ready sports, are in a tough situation if they have mothers who are so afraid of broken bones or strained hearts that they seek to keep their sons from the very encounters that would lead to feelings of pride and manliness. Many a boy has been kept out of sports because at some point in his childhood a heart murmur was mentioned. These are often completely unimportant, but they scare people—especially mothers; and the boy who has been told he has one obediently keeps away from activities he longs to take part in—and some that he doesn't. He is fortunate if, in high school, he gets a thorough enough physical examination so that his fears are dispelled, and he can begin to acquire some of the skills and fun he has thought would be denied him.

Since the example parents set in their own habits of caring for themselves and thinking about their health are bound to influence their children, it is important that their attitudes be wholesome and sensible.

— Because so many hours are put in at school each day, the physical conditions which adolescents find there must not be overlooked. These conditions can either promote health, or endanger it. Airy, light, uncrowded classrooms, good sanitation, a school day that is balanced between activity and desk work are all important. But how many parents really know much

“Most of the ‘problems’ which bring the average parent of the adolescent to the physician are problems only to the extent that the parent fails to appreciate what normally should be expected at this age, and how wide is the time range within which may take place the events terminating skeletal growth and the attainment of sexual maturity.”

Joseph A. Johnston, M. D.: Nutritional Problems of Adolescence.
Journal of the American Medical Association 137: 1587–1589. August
28, 1948—p. 1587.

about whether or not conditions in their junior and senior high schools are contributing to health? While parents cannot in each individual instance examine their child's school surroundings, they can as voters study the recommendations of the organizations they belong to, and the needs that school administrators call to their attention, in order to back up proposals that will make the schools good places for their boys and girls to spend so much of their lives in.

Food needs in adolescence

Adolescents are always pictured as raiding the refrigerator and consuming sundaes at the drugstore. It goes without saying that fast-growing boys and girls need a lot of food. They need it to build their enlarging bodies, and for the great amounts of energy they are ordinarily using up. Even before the rapid growth period sets in, the body begins to prepare for this growth by storing more protein and calcium in readiness for new bone and muscle growth. Boys, being larger than girls—in most cases—and taking part in more violently active sports, usually have larger appetites. But even if a girl is as hungry as her brother, she is reminded by the sylph-like figures she sees in advertisements that to be as willowy as the models she may need to be grimly resolved about the amount she eats.

When a girl tries to limit the amount she eats, she often picks out the wrong things to cut down on or omit. Such valuable foods as milk, potatoes, and bread are often refused in the mistaken notion that they are, in themselves, fattening. That teaching about food values at this stage must be artful is obvious. To be told what to eat by a mother who "knows better" is not what a teen-ager wants. But there are ways of having an influence, such as letting adolescents have practice in planning meals, marketing, and cooking, and calling attention to the need of balancing a day's meals so that they represent all the necessary foods.

A boy between 13 and 15 needs as many calories in a day as a moderately active man does—and many need more. A girl, in the years when she is growing fastest, needs as many as an active woman. Neither boy nor girl will weigh as much as the adults, but they must provide, among other things, for growing, which adults are through doing. No limits should be put on the amount adolescents eat, provided they are getting a suitable variety of foods and show no tendency to become definitely overweight.

One study of the diet of adolescent girls showed that, on the average, the girls were eating only about two-thirds of the recommended essentials. Their diets were especially deficient in vegetables, fruits, milk, and whole grain cereals.

One way to make sure that an adolescent is getting a diet that supplies all the things he requires is to see that he gets every day something from each of the seven basic groups of foods. These are described in the Department of Agriculture's "National Food Guide," available on request from the Department, Washington 25, D. C.

During a time of rapid growth, the need of much protein for body-building is especially acute. While it is hard to prove that a diet high in protein helps to ward off infection, nutritionists point out this probability. Animal

proteins are in general superior to vegetable proteins, such as are contained in dried peas and beans, so these latter can be relied on to furnish only a part of the necessary protein intake. The protein of milk is of excellent quality. Cheese is a concentrated form of milk protein. Such meats as liver and kidney provide even better food value than the muscle meats.

Breakfast should be hearty

A point that is sometimes overlooked is the importance of distributing protein-rich foods through the various meals of the day. Dinner is almost always planned around meat, fish or a meat substitute, for we think of this as the "main" meal of the day. Actually, the other meals are of great importance; one main meal and two light ones do not satisfy a growing child's needs as well as when all three meals are carefully planned to include some protein in each. To take care of about a third of an adolescent's needed protein for the day calls for a substantial breakfast, with, for example, a bowl of cereal, an egg, a glass of milk to drink in addition to what is on the cereal, and 2 or more slices of toast.

Adolescents sometimes say they are not hungry for breakfast, and want to dash off to school poorly prepared to start the day's work. Girls more often than boys go without an adequate breakfast. Often this is because they have not allowed themselves time. Parents know that about the only way out is to see that children get up earlier—which often involves going to bed a little earlier, no easy change to bring about. A family practice of sitting down together at the breakfast table, instead of running a relay race, helps, too.

Lunch is an important meal

One of the features of an adolescent's day that parents need to make it their business to know about is the facilities for lunch. Good school lunch arrangements include periods long enough so that students do not have to bolt their food, and uncrowded enough so that lunch is a pleasant interlude. Scheduling of lunch periods is important, too, so that children who left home on a very early bus are not so famished they can hardly wait through their last morning class. The purpose of the lunch room should be to serve nourishing food as inexpensively as possible, rather than to make money. By the time children reach junior high school they should have established good eating habits, but the school that serves only nutritionally desirable foods makes it easier for youngsters to keep in line with what they have learned at home.

Because a great many boys and girls take part of their lunch from home, usually sandwiches, and add only scantily from what is provided at school, it becomes very necessary to see that their lunch includes some form of protein during this rapid growth period—meat or fish, cheese, peanut butter, nuts or egg. (But mother ought not always to make the sandwiches herself!) The body needs of a boy who has jelly sandwiches will not, though he eats twice as many of them, be as well provided for as if the sandwich fillings he ate were of egg or meat. Milk to drink at lunch will provide protein in another form, as well as much-needed calcium.

For most adolescents, this is a time when they are less likely to put on excess weight from eating a good many rich foods than during periods of less rapid growth and intensive physical activity. One trouble with this is that to eat a lot of cake, pie, and sweets during these years means that habits may be formed that carry over into adult life, when activity is less, and when keeping weight within bounds may become a problem. In order to encourage the ever-hungry growing boy and girl to satisfy their appetites with better rounded foods, it is a good idea to have plenty of fruit and sandwich materials on hand, also milk, and perhaps ice cream, if the family has a freezer.

It is sometimes forgotten that during the whole growth period, from infancy through the middle teens, vitamin D, which promotes growth, is necessary except when children's bodies are exposed to plenty of sunlight. It seems likely that certain disorders of bone that occur only during the period of rapid growth preceding adolescence result from lack of enough calcium and vitamin D. Milk is the best source of calcium. If an adolescent doesn't average a quart of milk a day to which vitamin D has been added, it's wise to see that he gets a medicinal source of the vitamin. The doctor should decide the kind and dosage.

Another nutrient that needs to be looked out for in adolescence is iodine. In many parts of the country the water and locally grown foods will not provide enough. An easy and inexpensive way to make up the deficit is to use iodized salt.

We should not forget that family food habits tend to fall into ruts. When certain valuable foods are avoided—such as sea foods, for example, or green vegetables—patterns of eating are formed that are almost impossible to change. As one authority puts it, "Habits last longer than life." They are learned by parents and passed on to a second generation handicapped by being unwilling to try things with which they are unfamiliar.

A family that accustoms its children to a wide variety of foods is doing them a good turn; when away from home, they will not be hampered by being unable to enjoy any but a few familiar foods.

When an adolescent is overweight

While girls are more concerned than boys about their weight, often seeing themselves as too fat when they are merely plump, the really obese adolescent, whether boy or girl, is usually wretchedly self-conscious about it.

A danger in connection with trying to get rid of excess fat is that a child will, on a reducing diet, not get enough protein. Actually, the amount of protein eaten while reducing should be increased. Normal protein requirements of an adolescent who wants to lose weight can be met by a daily diet that includes eggs, a serving of cheese, and a generous helping of fish or meat, in addition to a quart of milk.

The key to the situation in the case of children who are overfat because they overeat lies in the discovery of why a boy or girl has to fall back on eating as a way of getting satisfaction. The problem will not be solved until the reason for the child's "hunger" is found. For this kind of hunger—

hunger for being loved and admired, for feeling successful and happy—is just as real as physical hunger. An understanding family doctor may be able to get at the cause of the unhappiness much more successfully than the parents. Most fat children, of course, are simply going through a stage of their development that doesn't last long, but during which their parents need the doctor's support to keep them from being anxious and passing on their worry to the children.

Sleep and rest

The sleep of the adolescent is important, for it, as much as his food, is the basis for his general well-being. It is obviously harder to see that teenagers get enough sleep than when they were younger, as home work and outside activities claim more and more attention, and parents dislike to be arbitrary. It is still a good rule, in adolescence, for the bed hour to be early enough so that a child doesn't have to be waked in the morning.

The adolescent should, if at all possible, sleep alone. Firm springs and mattress are important, for the hours spent in bed can very easily contribute to poor ways of holding the body if beds are sagging or too soft.

Adolescents should have a chance for all the rest and sleep they will take. Any adolescent who seems "lazy," who sleeps "too much," or doesn't seem to build up energy from the rest he gets has something wrong with him, and what it is, physical or emotional, needs to be discovered.

Teen-agers often exasperate their parents by seeming to have plenty of energy for the things they want to do, and to be "too tired" when asked to do something they feel no enthusiasm about.

No wonder boys and girls have these spurts of energy and corresponding periods of lackadaisical flopping. They are likely to do what they do so hard that they really do have periods of exhaustion. Fatigue can be forgotten while something exciting is going on, and only really felt later.

The exercise that adolescents get in sports and games is less likely to do them harm than monotonous work that uses only some muscles, instead of the whole body. Work that involves standing for long periods, carrying heavy loads, or using the same set of muscles hours on end, without rest, is bad. Until bones are fully knit, such as those of the pelvis, which unite late, such efforts may be harmful.

Posture

If an adolescent can forget about his body he is much more likely to have good posture than if his attention is always being called to his way of sitting, standing, and walking. If he has loose, comfortable clothes, shoes that do not cramp his feet, and if he is alert and happy, the chances are he'll hold his head up. An adolescent girl who slouches is very often one who has been made so conscious of her height that she hunches her shoulders and tries to duck her head between them. Self-consciousness can come from other things than height. Ordinarily a girl is proud when her breasts develop but the occasional girl whose pleasure in growing up to become a woman has been interfered with by mixed-up feelings about sex may try to hide the fact that she is developing adult characteristics, with resulting poor posture.

Standing or sitting up straight isn't as important as having a chance to change positions often. Chairs, desks, and light have a lot to do with the way a person will sit. If those provided are comfortable and adequate, and the adolescent is let alone, posture will take care of itself; if, that is, the boy or girl is well nourished, happy, and getting a reasonable amount of exercise.

Prevention of tooth decay

Most boys and girls have 28 permanent teeth by the early teens, but a few will not have them all until somewhat later. Girls, in line with their faster general rate of development, will be ahead of boys in this respect, too. Few adolescents get their 4 wisdom teeth until the closing years of the teens, and early twenties.

The time of eruption is not important, but the hygiene of the adolescent, to give his teeth the very best chance of survival in healthy condition, is. So many new permanent teeth are coming in at 11 or 12 that the amount of decay may seem to be almost at a standstill for a while. But caries gets around fast to those new teeth as the teens advance, and a sharp upward spurt in the number of teeth showing decay begins. The sixth year molars, which were the first permanent teeth to appear, about the time children entered school, and which are especially susceptible to decay, are often attacked by caries before a child is 12.

By the age of 18, studies have brought out, over four-fifths of boys and girls have one or more decayed teeth. Almost one-third of girls, at this age, have five or more decayed teeth, while the proportion of boys with this number needing attention is even higher.

Some families seem to have a lot more tooth decay than others, though not much is known about the reasons for these differences. For the majority of people, tooth decay is a problem throughout their lives.

Teeth seem to be mostly injured by acid formed in the mouth by the fermenting of sugars and starches, so that dental problems can usually be laid at least in part to family food habits and general health care.

The rise in tooth decay in the teens may be connected with the fact that the adolescent's diet is much less closely supervised than before. As he eats more meals and snacks away from home, there is a likelihood that he may turn to the sweet and starchy foods that appease hunger, but that may at the same time have poor effects on his teeth. Foods high in sugar mean that the teeth are open to attack from the resulting acid in the mouth. Even those who "know better," and whose diet and health habits are in general good, are easily tempted by heavily sweetened soft drinks, candy bars, sodas, and cookies. Though they may be quite careful about brushing their teeth night and morning, the effects of sweet foods begin too soon after they have been eaten for tooth-brushing hours later to be of much, if any, help. More ingenious methods of teaching need to be devised, both at home and at school, if adolescents are to take to heart the desirability of protecting and preserving the only set of teeth they'll ever get free of charge.

What fluorides accomplish

As the value of fluorides in preventing tooth decay has become more widely recognized, more and more communities have made sure that all children will get this protection by adding fluorine to the water supply. Other communities have programs for applying fluorine regularly to children's teeth. Children who have either had fluorine applied to their teeth at intervals, from early childhood, into young adulthood, or who have always had the benefit of drinking water containing a minute quantity of fluorine do show much less tooth decay, on the average. In fact, the reported reductions reach anywhere between 40 and 60 percent. But as the best results of fluorine, so far, don't come anywhere near a 100 percent reduction, the education of children about a good diet is still an important obligation of parents.

The early teens is a good time to switch over to having the adolescent take over responsibility for his own twice-yearly appointments with the dentist. If he begins now to take over this responsibility, he will perhaps (but only perhaps) be less likely later, when away at school or at work, to fall into neglectful habits. By means of careful periodic checkups and repairs dental caries can be kept to a minimum. (If dentists' reminders of appointments were mailed or phoned directly to adolescents it might help.)

Some boys and girls whose teeth have not lined up well, so that their bite is imperfect, may need the attention of an orthodontist. Many irregularities straighten out of themselves, as the jaws develop and permanent teeth erupt. It is the general conclusion of dentists that if the teeth need straightening the teen-age is the most rewarding time to do it. After the age of 12 all the permanent teeth, with the exception of the wisdom teeth, are usually in the mouth, and therefore the treatment can be planned on a sounder and more permanent basis than it could be earlier.

If a teen-ager has been under the care of a competent dentist during his elementary school years, the dentist will be able to judge whether the bite is getting to be regular enough so that straightening is unnecessary; or whether the jaw has not grown as it should, with the result that a receding chin or "buck teeth" may disfigure the young person's appearance. Serious malocclusion of the teeth is a handicap that the adolescent, who is already very critical of his appearance, should not have to have added to his worries.

Prevention of disease

There are several things against which protective measures should be taken in the teens, because the results of childhood immunization wear off in time.

We cannot count on children's building up immunity to diphtheria, because there is so little of it for them to be exposed to nowadays. Adolescents who were immunized against it in babyhood need to be tested in adolescence, and if the Schick test is positive, should again be immunized. This is especially important in the case of girls, whose immunity, when they become mothers, helps to protect their babies in the first months of life.

Smallpox vaccination, done in babyhood and at school entrance or thereabouts, does not protect a child for good. Even though smallpox is rarely seen nowadays, vaccination needs to be repeated every 5 years, or in case of an epidemic, if safety is to be assured.

Protection against tetanus (lockjaw) can be maintained by booster doses every 3 years after the original immunization.

In the case of some diseases, children are actually better off if they have them before they reach adulthood, so no effort should be made to avoid them. Two outstanding examples are mumps and German measles, both mild diseases without harmful results in childhood. But coming in adolescence, or adulthood, mumps can involve the male sex glands, and cause sterility; and when German measles occur during the first 2 or 3 months of pregnancy, there is a strong possibility that the baby may be born with congenital defects.

An adolescent may be better off going to the doctor alone, and the doctor is often far better able to get a boy or girl to cooperate in following his suggestions than when these are given to parents. It is another case of the adolescent's preference for being on his own, and not continuing to be subject to close supervision and direction by his parents.

Illness and disease

Colds and other respiratory infections are a main cause of illness in the teens, the childhood communicable diseases like chicken pox and measles being pretty much out of the way. Colds, headaches, and digestive upsets keep the early teen-ager out of school 2 or 3 days a year.

An adolescent whose diet is carefully planned to include all the essential foods is likely to be in good shape to avoid or easily throw off colds and other infections. Rest plays an important part, too, in keeping the body able to resist disease.

The various diseases that infrequently attack adolescents, such as diabetes or tuberculosis, are still common enough to show good reason for yearly medical examinations. While tuberculosis is no longer, in most places, the menace it once was, it is more likely to appear in adolescence than earlier. That adolescent girls seem susceptible to it earlier than boys may be connected with their earlier maturation. Negro girls are more likely than white to become victims of tuberculosis, not necessarily because they are Negro but quite as likely because they oftener live under conditions that predispose to catching the disease.

Tuberculosis has been reduced almost miraculously. Early discovery means a really good chance of cure.

Many parents have heard warnings about danger to the heart in allowing adolescents to take part in very strenuous sports, particularly those that involve long stretches of hard exertion. Careful study of the development of the heart and its function during adolescence has convinced specialists in this field that the precautions that have been urged on many youngsters during the teens are unnecessary. A boy or girl who has a healthy heart need not worry about straining it. If a heart impairment exists, let the

doctor decide whether, and how much, activity should be controlled. Over-protection needs to be avoided as much as underprotection.

Accidents as causes of death in adolescence

Accidents are the great killers in the teen-age years just as they have been throughout childhood (infancy excepted). Motor vehicles are the cause of more than one-half the deaths of adolescents between the ages 15 and 19. And there is good reason to believe that more children are crippled by accidents than by polio, about which parents ordinarily feel more apprehension. But only slowly is the preventive measure of teaching adolescents to drive safely being made a routine part of their school life. Here is a place where parents could be very effective in seeing that driving courses and practice are introduced generally into high schools. Also, parents might well give more thought to the best ways at their command of helping their sons and daughters learn to drive.

Adolescents, little in awe of their parents anyway, are not going to be very much impressed by admonitions from them. If possible, it is far better to have teen-agers taught to drive by some one other than their parents. It is hard for parents not to be critical and dictatorial. An outsider, who is less emotionally involved, can be more reasonable and will be less likely to "jump on" the teen-ager for mistakes.

The practice of tractor-driving on farms, so common among boys far too young to get drivers' licenses, is a grave question that parents might make the subject of serious discussion in community groups.

Other accidental causes of death that rank high during adolescence are drowning and firearms.

It is obvious that these types of accidents are in great part preventable, and what is more, preventable by parents. Parents can hardly be ignorant that boys will try both swimming and shooting. These besetting interests should be used as the basis for instruction, instead of for warnings or prohibitions. The danger from either hazard could be brought very low if more parents and others who enter children's lives recognized their responsibility. Fathers, even those with little or no interest in hunting, might find target practice a good way of building up companionship with their children, at a time when the pursuit of pleasure in 40-year-olds and teen-agers so often takes widely divergent paths. And it would be interesting to learn just how many—or few—American families have the excuse of living where they can rarely get to a place to swim.

An occasional child seems to have more than his fair share of accidents. When one after another happens to the same boy or girl, so that he or she seems to be "accident prone," the situation calls for study of the child's personality and surroundings to discover, if possible, what underlies this tendency.

Next to accidents in order as a cause of death comes cancer. Because this disease makes a sly start, and is hard to detect in the early stages, the value of regular and thorough physical examinations is again clear. Although the number of deaths from cancer in adolescence is not great, early discovery would result in cutting down even this number.

Acne

A troublesome condition associated with this period is acne. The skin eruptions on the face so common in adolescence are especially trying because they come at a time when young people are very anxious about their looks.

Inflamed pimples and blackheads come about because of the clogging of the oil ducts that carry oil to the skin. These ducts apparently do not grow fast enough to take care of the increased activity of the sebaceous glands, and the accumulation of oil and dirt on the skin becomes infected. In girls, the appearance of acne is sometimes associated with menstrual difficulties that may point to an imbalance of sex hormones.

There are several things that adolescents can do, either to ward off or to clear up these blemishes.

The first is to stick to a wholesome diet, that contains a much smaller proportion than usual of sweets, starches, and fats. For example, some adolescents find they must cut out fried foods, and candy, especially chocolate, because of its high fat content. A diet that contributes to regular bowel habits is extremely important. Such foods as tomatoes, oranges and other citrus fruits, raw vegetables, eggs, meat, and milk should form a large part of the diet. Getting plenty of sunlight and outdoor exercise helps.

The second way of combatting acne is very simple. The adolescent should make a point of washing his face and neck thoroughly at least twice a day with soap and warm water. (Girls who clean their faces with creams may actually be adding to the oil that is helping to make trouble.) Hard scrubbing is not desirable, as it may irritate the skin and cause the spread of infection. It will pay to take time to go over the skin with plenty of soapsuds, to rinse thoroughly, and gently pat the skin dry. Pinching and pressing of pimples and blackheads should be avoided, as it may cause further infection.

When such efforts, carefully observed, don't bring good results, the boy or girl should have the help of a physician who understands the treatment of acne. It may even be that in instances where worry or emotional problems seem to be connected with skin trouble, the sympathy and understanding of a friendly doctor may be of as much help as medication.

Proper attention to the skin in the early stages of trouble may keep it from getting to the point where medical treatment is necessary. Much acne is a temporary thing when not aggravated by an adolescent's attempts to deal with it by trying all sorts of preparations. Parents sometimes have to be careful not to betray their own anxiety over it, for fear they may add to the young person's feeling of inferiority.

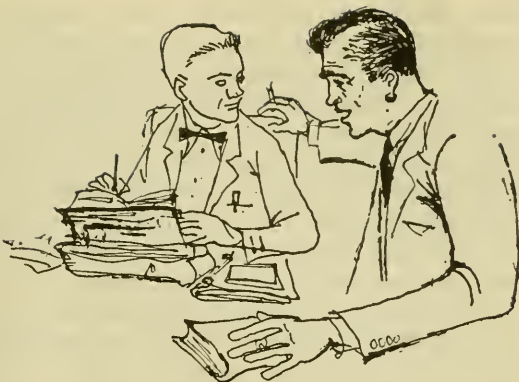
Drinking

The best safeguard parents can throw around their children in regard to drinking is education, and the best method of education is their own practice. Disciplinary measures, deprivation of freedom, or moralizing rarely, if ever, work. Even if they did, they are hardly in line with sensible parents' aim, which is to rear a person capable of making his own decisions.

The adolescent is forging his own standards; what they will be depends much more on the attitudes and examples observed in his family than on anything his parents commanded him to have as standards.

If drinking threatens to become a problem, the concern of parents should be to discover why a young person needs the transient sense of well-being and the false sense of importance that alcohol lends. The resort to alcohol may betray a sense of insecurity and inadequacy that needs to be brought to light and sympathetically treated. Anyone whose inhibitions are such that he must try to get rid of them to feel happy needs help. Such help can come only from people whose training has fitted them to unravel the causes of the fears and doubts the person has about himself, that make him need bolstering up.

Parents' part in educational and vocational planning



With the entrance into the teens, when children leave the elementary school behind, education takes on something of a new look. Up to this time, all children have been studying much the same things. But as they get older, the great individual differences between them become more marked, and need arises for subject matter that will meet their greatly varying requirements. Some will lean (or be pushed!) toward business courses, some toward highly academic or college preparatory courses, while others will enter vocational schools.

Not only must the needs of individual boys and girls be considered, but the fact faced that from now on the student, in both junior and senior high school, will be much more on his own. Often, he no longer has one teacher, who more or less watches over him; now, there is probably no one who can really be said to know him, someone to whom he can (or should be able to) turn for help when he needs it. Unless the school is very small, the teachers he meets every day have too many students coming and going to have more than a passing acquaintance with each. Even if counselors are provided, they seem too remote and "special" to make a real relationship possible. The boy or girl may think of them as helping only when some serious problem threatens.

Parents who stop to think about the new experiences their teen-agers are meeting at junior and senior high school entrance can be helpful, even if by no more than taking possible repercussions calmly, and recognizing irritation that seems to be directed against them for what it is—a safety valve.

These are years in which parents may be tempted to look ahead and make definite plans for their children's education. For one thing, those who are hoping to go to certain colleges must take courses required for entrance. And because of our knowledge that adolescents have pretty nearly reached mental maturity by the age of 16 we may feel that it's high time for them to begin deciding on what direction they want to take.

But while young people's minds may be approaching the top in development by this time, their judgment, which is dependent on experience as well

as on intelligence, may be far from mature. We need to take care neither to hurry them into decisions nor make decisions for them.

The school has fairly good knowledge of the young student's mental capacity, his drive and ambition, his habits of work. His marks throughout high school often will be a pretty sound indication of whether or not he is likely to succeed in college work. There are many exceptions here, of course, particularly in the case of able youngsters who do not really hit their stride until they meet the greater challenge of college. Parents need to keep informed about what the school knows, so that planning with their children can take these things into consideration.

If they have not already been concerned with finding out how adequate the educational program in their community is, this is a good time to get busy. Educators make constant efforts to suit schools to the real needs of children. But they are helpless to do it alone. Parents, who make up so large a part of the public, must be responsible for informing themselves about what good education is and for acting in its interest whenever and wherever they can devise ways to do so.

Parents can learn much about the highly individual needs of their children by observing them. By watching what they are interested in, what they are good at, and what they are indifferent to, we can sometimes be ready to give really valuable help. When boys or girls show special enthusiasm for some subject in school, or some hobby, it may be possible for their parents to provide them with facilities that encourage them to do outstanding work in it. Mechanical drawing, wood and metal work, stage scenery or lighting, radio and TV programs, pet raising, interior decorating, dress design, photography are just a few of the host of activities in some of which teenagers may show aptitude. To be on the alert to such things will mean, often, that parents can put out what money and time they have to spend in ways that will bring satisfaction to both their children and themselves. This is certainly not true of efforts to "make" youngsters interested in things their parents think they ought to be interested in. But parents can sometimes make *themselves* interested in what commands their children's attention.

"The ideal home, therefore, is one which allows for gradual emancipation, one in which the emotional ties between children and family are never so strong that the desire for independence leads to internal conflict, inadequacy, or rebellion. As the child grows to maturity, every opportunity should be provided for independence of judgment, emotion, and decision."

Alexander A. Schneiders: *The Psychology of Adolescence*.
Milwaukee: Bruce, 1951—p. 409.

Try-out activities have value

While activities for which boys and girls show a liking in early adolescence may prove to be short-lived, they still serve a very useful purpose. Being successful at reporting for the school paper, or for trimming a float in a pageant are things that add to the self-confidence of the teen-ager. Especially for those who feel that their school subjects have little relationship to real life such activities play a most useful role. To have something to be proud of may make the less favored parts of school work bearable, so that the goal of graduation is reached without struggle or protest.

Parents can take comfort from the fact that schools are now recognizing what used to be called "extracurricular activities" as a very real part of the learning experience of students. Two out of three public high schools in 1951 scheduled an activity period within school hours. Much more thought, too, is going into helping boys and girls get into activities they can be enthusiastic about.

We need to keep cautioning ourselves, though, not to suppose that special interests, skills, or hobbies are going to lead somewhere educationally or vocationally. Parents sometimes tend to take fleeting interests too seriously. They may weigh children down with the feeling that they are "quitters" when they find a new interest. Even after graduation from high school or college the average person switches jobs a number of times. Try-out jobs are very useful; finding out what you do not want to do is often as valuable as finding out what you want to do. A teen-ager, at 14 or 16, is unusual if he already knows what he wants to work toward, and winds up doing it later, as planned.

Some of our leading educators are deeply disturbed about the way girls' interests are overlooked in the curriculum. Very little account has been taken in the past of the attitudes of girls. High school courses began as courses for boys, and far too little change in emphasis has taken place. More thought needs to go into education leading toward work in the many fields for which girls are especially suited, like housing, health and safety, and social welfare—all closely touching on the security and happiness of family life.

How about college?

Many young people go to college largely because their parents have shown, for many years, that they expect them to. The selection of a college, even, is made by the parents, sometimes on the very slim basis of their own attendance at a certain school. How much more meaningful the decision is likely to be if Ray or Polly themselves send for catalogs, talk them over in detail, and listen to discussions among friends already in college, or older people, about the merits of various ones.

There is every reason for parents to show interest, and join in the discussion. They can, for example, point out some of the advantages, and disadvantages, of small and large schools. They can be helpful in bringing up the possibility of junior college, in the case of young people who are uncertain about embarking on a 4-year course. On the financial side, they

will probably be able to be much more realistic about the chances for part-time employment in certain places, and the returns to be expected.

Those whose boys and girls are good students can help by unearthing information about scholarships. Even where there are school counselors whose job it is to know about what is available, students themselves may be hesitant to let it be known that they need help, and so let opportunities slip by. Parents who believe their children may qualify for scholarships should begin to explore the possibilities, which are more plentiful than they might think, long before graduation from high school is due.

The million or more young people who are helping to earn their expenses at college help younger adolescents, too, by showing that with energy and determination, a college education is possible for many more young people each year.

When adolescents want to leave school

One of the things a good many parents come up against in the middle teen-age years is the flat announcement that their son or daughter wants to stop school. This may come suddenly, as a complete surprise, or it may follow growing dissatisfaction and unhappiness over such things as poor grades or failures, or feeling out of place. In any case, it will pay if parents can curb their impulses toward a hasty reaction in favor of careful search for causes.

Bill gives us an example of the kind of bombshell a boy—that average well-behaved, likable boy we all know—can explode before his astonished parents. At 16 he came out in February with his decision to quit school and hitchhike from his home in the middle west to the coast. He had been doing all right at school. All his parents had noticed was his increasing restlessness and dissatisfaction with almost every question brought up in the family, like plans for next summer's vacation. Patient exploration brought out that Bill's itch to be on his own, to travel, and have adventures had become unbearable. He was sure that to find a job in the alluring West and begin to earn his own living was infinitely more important than the tedious courses he was droning through in high school. Only after a good many talks had taken place did Bill compromise with his parents. It was agreed that if he would finish the year at school, his parents would match whatever he earned and saved out of his allowance in the meantime so that he could take a bus trip West in the summer. Eagerly Bill began to work on plans to have a friend join him, and the crisis was over.

The very fact that Bill took his parents into his confidence, instead of running away from home and school, shows that he felt he could count on them to be understanding and reasonable. Their ability to grasp their ambitious, independent son's need for something new and different saved the day. Future plans could wait.

But often something far harder to deal with than the normal adolescent desire for adventure lies back of the desire to leave school. Sometimes, a child who is failing, or who is totally uninterested in school, is so upset emotionally that it isn't easy for his parents to get to the bottom of his

trouble. His (or her) lack of interest and unhappiness may be connected with a variety of conditions. The whole situation needs to be looked into.

For one thing, does such an adolescent feel lonely and left out at school? If a boy lacks friends, if a girl has to wear poor clothes that set her off from the rest, or, if a home is such that the young girl or boy doesn't feel comfortable about bringing friends into it, life at school may be barren and empty. In other cases, something disturbing at home—severe illness, unemployment, lack of harmony between his parents, or even death—has made the adolescent insecure.

Wallie feels, "Oh, what's the use? No one at school likes me. If only I could quit school and get a job I could have some fun." Evelyn falls in love, and all she can think of is getting married and having a home of her own. Her mother, she says, "never lets me make any suggestions about fixing up the house to look better, or making the food and table attractive the way I learned in Home Ec." She's so rebellious, and so dreamy over her love affair, that she has completely lost interest in keeping up her grades. Let's hope Evelyn's near-failure will awaken her mother to the need of talking things out with her daughter, and coming to an understanding.

Sometimes an understanding of why a child wants to leave school is not easily reached. A bright 13-year-old who had just entered senior high school came home one day and announced she was not going back. Though

(One reason some adolescents are shy about bringing home with them any friends they may have made at school.)

A worker goes to visit the home of a boy who is missing from school: "An abandoned, partially dismantled automobile with the hood, radiator, and two wheels off blocked the entrance (to the yard). Another car, a 1929 Model 'A' Ford with an icicle extending from the radiator to the ground, was parked beside the wreckage. Two or three broken, half-buried stoves lay along the path to the house. A clothes line with some frozen clothes on it flapped in the January wind blowing in from the river. A pile of broken boxes salvaged from the town dump leaned against the porch. The porch steps were made of railroad ties and pieces of driftwood. There were several gaping holes a foot or more in diameter in the floor; . . ."

A. B. Hollingshead: *Elmtown's Youth*.
New York: Wiley, 1949—p. 347.

her puzzled mother patiently persisted in trying to get at her reasons, the girl held back. She didn't see how her mother could possibly help, and hated to let her know about the jeers and ridicule she faced at school because of her clothes. They were too childish looking for the tall girl she had suddenly become. Once she admitted the trouble, her mother, without buying the new dresses she could not afford, cleverly managed enough alterations to save the day.

No two adolescents' problems are the same. Each one takes soul-searching by parents, and an attempt to look at things from the point of view of youth. When half of those who enter high school do not graduate, it is clear that schools, somehow, fail to do what we suppose they will do: meet the needs of our children. Now that all States require children to stay in school until they are 16, and a number set the age limit at 17 or 18, some ways should be found of making these years more profitable than they seem to be for many boys and girls.

Sometimes the desire to leave school comes because the youngster has about reached the limit of what he can get out of the regular school program, despite the school's effort to provide special learning experiences for the slow child. If a boy or girl is failing school subjects, urging him to study harder may only make him feel more hopeless. Careful exploration of his abilities will serve a lot better. Perhaps stopping school isn't the answer, but finding a kind of school that more nearly fits his needs.

Meeting individual needs

Some parents are slow to accept the idea of vocation or trade courses because they place too high a value on an academic education. If, when a boy's or girl's abilities have been measured by suitable tests, and they show that a vocational course will probably better meet his or her needs or interests, trying out a change is worthwhile to see if the boy or girl will be happier. There are different kinds of intelligence, and we owe it to our children to see that they have opportunities to develop to the fullest along the lines of their particular gifts. Gifted artists, for example, have struggled along for years in a school atmosphere unsuited to their needs, because parents felt pursuing a career in art would be chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. Boys who might have been excellent mechanics, because of their unusual manual skill, spend their lives selling insurance, clerking in stores or filling other jobs in which they feel little interest because they never had a chance at learning skills for which they had very special gifts. Girls who do not marry and have a home life but have incipient skills in homemaking may likewise get caught in jobs that have little relation to their abilities.

Then there is the slow-starter, a type of which many famous men have been examples. For a boy to be near the bottom of his class at school, to have trouble with mathematics or languages or science is no sure sign that he doesn't have the stuff in him to make his mark later. Sometimes an adolescent is just about ready to give up, because he has for so many years failed to hit his stride. His teachers, and perhaps even his parents, consider his abilities mediocre, to say the least. It takes rare insight and patience to

see below the surface, and help a boy or girl who has wandered along indifferently for years, find himself in some new flash of interest or self-belief.

Occasionally it is only a matter of waiting. Alec, who had worked consistently at a level well under his known capabilities, announced to his parents when he went from junior to senior high school, "Well, here's where I get down to work and get some good marks." Since then he has had nothing but A's! Just what determined the lad to buckle down? His father and mother may never know, but such incidents encourage parents who are wondering whether their son (or daughter) will ever wake up. Somehow, Alec came to the conclusion that he, and he alone, was the responsible party.

The so-called "hidden" costs of a high school education may make dropping out of school easier than going on. For some, keeping up the pace set by those who come from families of comfortable means becomes a hopeless struggle. At the very time when boys and girls greatly need the self-esteem of being able to look and do as others do, they find themselves becoming a financial luxury for their parents. Their clothes, entertainment and food are about as expensive as adults'. Some of them drop out, or would like to drop out, because they are disheartened by the feeling that the cards are stacked against them. More and more schools are coming to the conclusion that it is high time for them to take a look at the value of some of the proms, class dinners, athletic events and other tid-bits of high school life that can be ill-afforded, if at all, by a good many students.

Parents, of course, cannot give children money they do not have. But sometimes parents look on things for which their children claim they need money as foolish. Some have little understanding that football games or other events are an important part of conversational fare around school. Not to be able to rehash a game, talk about a popular movie, or laugh over incidents at a school picnic with your schoolmates means that you are an outsider, and denied the precious feeling of belonging. Also, to be accepted on equal footing by the group, a boy and girl must dress not too differently from others. The right clothes are an expensive and important item. Lots of girls, though, are making many of their own clothes by the mid-teens.

“. . . presence in a school culture which abounds with cliques and more formal social groups intensifies the need to belong to these groups. An adolescent who sees others in social groups and hears others talking about their group activities is necessarily going to be concerned about attaining membership, and will be conscious of his lack of status if he fails of acceptance.”

Raymond G. Kuhlen: *The Psychology of Adolescent Development*.
New York: Harper, 1952—p. 290.

Boys need a little money if they are to have dates, without which most would certainly feel that school life was hardly worth living. It won't hurt them to get out and earn the money for dates, but parents can often make helpful suggestions as to how to go about it. The great number of high school students who carry jobs outside of school hours, or try hard to get them, show that adolescents are eager not to be a burden on their parents.

Some adolescents may become anxious to be done with school because their parents are overeager, and press them too hard. The sad thing about this is that it is the high hopes of the parents, their strong desire to have their children get all that's coming to them, that lowers the children's aspiration. If parents expect so much of a young person that he's forever falling short of their hopes, he may give up the struggle. Yet it is only human to want children to be successes, in whom parents can take pride. Failure in a child implies failure in his parents—or so they guiltily think. To count on our children to raise our own feelings of importance is to deny them the dignity they deserve as independent human beings. One mother says frankly that she believes it was largely her nagging that caused her son, now 20, to take things easy while he was in high school. He has never exerted himself, and is content—up to now—with a succession of jobs lasting only a few months that leave him time for his hobby of wood carving.

Even if a boy or girl does leave school, his education need not stop. Before long, the job he gets into may make a boy prick up his ears about the availability of helpful courses at night school. A girl who has not listened to advice at school sees with her own eyes that she needs more than typing to get ahead in the office she's employed in. Sometimes, too, those who have been in such a hurry to leave school find that doing so cuts them off from young people. Many turn to night school as a way of making social contacts, as well as getting more education.

The adolescent's occupational future

Many a time, from the days when he first announced he was going to be a fireman, or a cowboy, a boy's ideas about his future have been aired, and so have his sister's about becoming a nurse, or the mother of six children.

But much more serious than these enthusiastic, if fickle, ambitions have been those of the mother and father. A man who is proud of a business he has built up quite naturally would like to see his son enter it, although this is not actually the pattern of American life. The hopes of a father who has been forced into an occupation he detests are centered about something quite different for his boys.

Other things being equal, boys and girls are quite definitely swayed in occupational choice by the kind of place their families hold in the community. If his family has high cultural standing or ambitions, if the family intelligence is of a high order, and if, in addition, family finances or scholarship aid make it seem reasonable that he can do what interests him most, a boy probably leans toward a profession. No American child is boxed in by a class system that denies him the chance to try for anything he wants. But it is less likely that the son of an artisan will become a lawyer or a doctor

than that he will himself learn a trade. This points to the need for our schools to be watching out for boys and girls whose inborn ability rates high, and whose talents should be put to use.

Parents' counsel is needed

Young people express themselves as wanting jobs that offer steady employment, increasing rewards in terms of money and advancement, and a chance to use their own initiative. Also important to them is the esteem in which different kinds of work is held. White collar jobs, they imply, offer more prestige than those requiring manual work.

But the advantages nowadays are not always on the side of the white collar worker. The one who wears a blue shirt not only often makes more money, but his working conditions are just as likely to be good, and the possibilities of his climbing the ladder to better positions are just as great as those of the person who starts out in a minor white collar job. It often happens that in big industrial concerns he will get good supervision and training that will help him to rise.

Parents can have a lot to do with seeing that youth are steered toward the kind of occupations that fit their abilities. While by no means all youth in mid-adolescence have definite ideas about what they want to do, it is not too early to be watching them for developing interests and introducing them to ideas about the wide range of possible jobs. The Occupational Outlook Handbook of the Bureau of Labor Standards, which can be consulted in libraries, gives valuable information. For 30 cents, a copy of the United States Department of Labor's Job Guide for Young Workers can be bought from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C.

To some extent it is possible to have adolescents' capabilities judged. Even though vocational interest, personality, and aptitude tests come far short of giving the answers as to a youth's ability to succeed at certain jobs, they do give clues. If local schools are not equipped to give such tests, the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture, the State university, or the local office of the United States Employment Service can be depended on to give information about them. In cities and rural areas alike the Employment Service is working increasingly close with schools.

Careers don't just happen

Not only is it important for a person to know himself, he must also get a clear idea of the job. To become a librarian is Clare's hope, based on her liking for books. She has never thought of all the other things librarians do besides read! The laborious, painstaking detail, the insight necessary to deal with people in search of help, the confinement to a desk are some of the things she needs to consider, as well as salaries in this field, and where special opportunities lie.

A great many girls dream, in the early teens, of becoming authors, dancers, or singers, with no idea of the struggle and heartbreak that are often met in hacking out such careers. One way of helping girls to be less unrealistic

about such glamorous vocations would be to introduce them to the lives of women who have gone into these fields. A collection of real life stories like Helen Ferris' "This Happened to Me," or an autobiography like Agnes De Mille's "Dance to the Piper," or Janet Scudder's "Modeling My Life" might furnish a basis for more down-to-earth self-appraisal and understanding of the dreamed-of career.

The American Library Association's pamphlet, "Vocations in Fact and Fiction,"* contains hundreds of titles of stories and real life accounts of a wide range of vocations. No matter what a girl or boy aspires to there are life stories that would help in the gaining of perspective.

Parents could help their children toward being realistic about the returns they may reasonably expect from different kinds of work. Young people ordinarily think of themselves as advancing fast, but the amounts they expect to be earning have little relation to the incomes people actually receive. Looking up figures as to what rewards can be expected in various fields, and how long it takes to reap them, would be a project in which boys and girls and their parents would be almost equally interested. Young people are often influenced unduly by the success of some one person in an occupation or profession, forgetting that sober inquiry into average earnings would bring out a less rosy picture. What one doctor or one advertising writer they know earns is hardly a good basis for drawing conclusions.

Some of the other things families might profitably talk over would be the kinds of work that are seasonal, those that are more or less subject to change by inventions, or changing conditions, and those that are unceasingly necessary, like jobs connected with building, and with producing and selling food. The hourly wage of a bricklayer or a plasterer may sound remarkably high. But the boy who thinks of learning such a skill should keep in mind that neither one can expect to work every day of the year.

Such a boy, and others who are interested in becoming competent at some special type of workmanship, should find out about the apprenticeship training that is required for skilled trades. It is available to those who are 16 or older. The training includes considerable work experience under supervision in a particular trade, as well as classroom instruction in other aspects of the work. This a boy usually gets in a vocational high school, which is also where he can inquire about the details of apprenticeship training.

Parents can help their teen-agers question their own qualifications for different kinds of work, and the kind of life that goes with a certain kind of job. A boy who is a great lover of the outdoors, and who would find a desk job irksome, may value an active life so highly that he is willing to forego tempting chances that would mean confinement to a big city.

The wider the experience, reading, and travel of the young person, the wider his acquaintance with the many occupations that offer possibilities.

*American Library Association, Chicago, 1953.

A boy or girl who never gets very far from the town where he is growing up is unlikely to have his imagination stimulated by any great variety of kinds of work. One who has spent his childhood in a fishing village or a mining town, may have his horizon limited by the fact that most of the men he knows are busy at the same jobs. This hampering of opportunity to know about a wider range of work opportunities could be offset if all schools provided guidance counselors competent to open up windows of young people's minds. The voices of many students and "drop-outs" are loud in protest as to the little they are offered in the way of vocational guidance. But parents are the people who, in the end, determine what schools offer. They can, if they will, use their influence to help their schools in their endeavor to see that students get help in planning their future. The small extra cost in taxes shouldn't weigh very heavily in comparison with the immense difference such help might make in young people's lives.

School plus work experience

Some schools and colleges are going even further than providing vocational guidance counseling. They are arranging for students to have work experience while they are still in school. Part-time work and part-time school appeal to many adolescents who are eager to have a chance to try out different kinds of jobs. Communities that back such projects are performing a fine service to young people who, when seeking a job, would otherwise come up against the question, "What experience have you had?" Inability to point to work experience often stands in the way of employment, and leaves the youngster on the horns of a baffling dilemma.

One group of high school students who are enthusiastic about their school's plan of study plus work reports such varied part-time jobs as bee-keeping, dyeing shoes, teaching gymnastics in a dance studio, making fishing flies, and serving as lifeguard on a beach.

Adolescents are working outside of school hours in greatly increasing numbers. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Standards, one in every 4 students, in 1950, worked part-time in addition to going to school, while in 1940, the proportion was only 1 in 25. So great are the pressures of cost in high school that one high school student out of 7 is now working 35 hours a week, outside school. In other words, what practically amounts to a full-time job. The danger to the health of those who are carrying such a heavy load is obvious. Families who either need the extra money this work brings in, or whose sons and daughters are determined to get the experience their jobs offer, are faced with a question that needs very careful thought.

If teen-agers who are ambitious to begin earning do undertake work outside of school hours, must help to support the family, or choose to leave school to go to work as soon as the law allows, parents should see that they obtain age certificates as proof of age. They should also inform themselves as to measures their community or State has set up for the protection of young workers. They can find out about these at the office at school that gives work permits, or inquire of a representative of the State Labor Department.

Such protective measures should include:

1. A 14-year-old minimum age of employment.
2. A 16-year-old minimum age in manufacturing industries.
3. An 18-year-old minimum age in hazardous occupations.
4. An 8-hour day or 40-hour week for those under 18 when school is not in session.
5. Not more than 3, or at most 4, hours of work a day for those under 18 attending school.
6. Avoidance of night work for minors under 18 years.
7. At least 1 full day of rest in 7.

When such protective measures are not enforced, there are more industrial accidents, more physical breakdowns, and more instability and job shifting. Before encouraging a son or daughter to take a certain job, parents should consider seriously the reputation of the firm or individual for whom the young person will be working. They should also try to find out whether the young worker will have good supervision and training, and will have a chance to develop on the job.

In general, the chance that future jobs will be more and more rewarding is tied up with the amount of education that is demanded for rising in that kind of work. A boy might become a very successful printer without having finished high school. But should such a boy find after two or three years that he dislikes this work, he may feel it is too late to go back and take up school again.

One of the few things we can be sure of is that many of those who are adolescents today will take a long time and a good many tries at different jobs before they "settle down" into something permanent. One study of 355 young people 6 years after their graduation from high school brought out that over half of them had stayed at their first job less than a year. The matter of deciding on a "life work" is subject to many factors—not the least among them chance. Parents cannot regard things as "settled" when their son or daughter is still in the teens. It is not the usual pattern for things to go smoothly, for a young adolescent to make up his mind and stay by his early choice. Far-seeing parents will not try to hustle their children into decisions; for the later teen-age years and the early twenties are a time when the youth's outlook on life is broadening so decidedly that he should have plenty of freedom to alter his course if his interests change.

The future lies with youth



If any parents have expected to find in this booklet "Answers to Questions that Baffle Parents of Teen-agers" they have, by now, been disillusioned. Of course a bulletin that attempted any such thing would be suspect. Even treatises on growing tomatoes or broccoli don't lay down exact rules, or guarantee results, even if their suggestions are faithfully followed. Soil, climate, and other growing conditions cannot be predicted. Even though the seeds are guaranteed, it's up to the gardener to solve a lot of unforeseen problems, once the seeds have sprouted.

Human beings, fortunately, are much more variable and unpredictable and wonderful than plants. Children's growth would only be stifled or twisted fantastically if we tried to make rules that would fit all cases. Add to the infinite variety of human material the vastly different circumstances under which different parents are rearing their children, and the unexpected changes families are subjected to in the modern world, and the pattern of possibilities becomes unbelievably intricate.

We know so little, yet, about human behavior. We have to feel our way. Our love, if it's sane and sensible, will throw a glow of a good many candlepower over our efforts. Our ability to wait should be pretty well developed, too, by the time our children reach adolescence. We can put great confidence in the remarkable ability of our children to endure, to bounce back from pressure, to meet adversity stoutly.

These last few precious years in which we have our children living with us is a time to enjoy. The picnics, the corn-popping of an evening on the spur of the moment, the family jokes, and the songs we've sung together are going to be permanent possessions. Ten years from now we'll laugh with our boy or girl at the memory of some anxious moment when the air crackled with electric sparks, on both sides, over something we couldn't safely let them do—like buying a hazardous old rattletrap of a car.

Yesterday, we were worrying over their reading too many comic books; today, they're deep in the same books we read. If we can only stand back far enough to look at these things in the long view!

That doughty American, Carl Sandburg, has a word for us:

“One thing I know deep out of my time: youth when lighted and alive and given a sporting chance is strong for struggle and not afraid of any toils or punishments or dangers or deaths.

“What shall be the course of society and civilization across the next hundred years?”

“For the answers read if you can the strange and baffling eyes of youth.

*“Yes, for the answers, read, if you can, the strange and baffling eyes of youth.”**

*Sandburg, Carl: *Always the Young Strangers*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co. 1953—p. 304.

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